BANG BANG!!

COME ALONG!

COME SEE!

COME SEE!

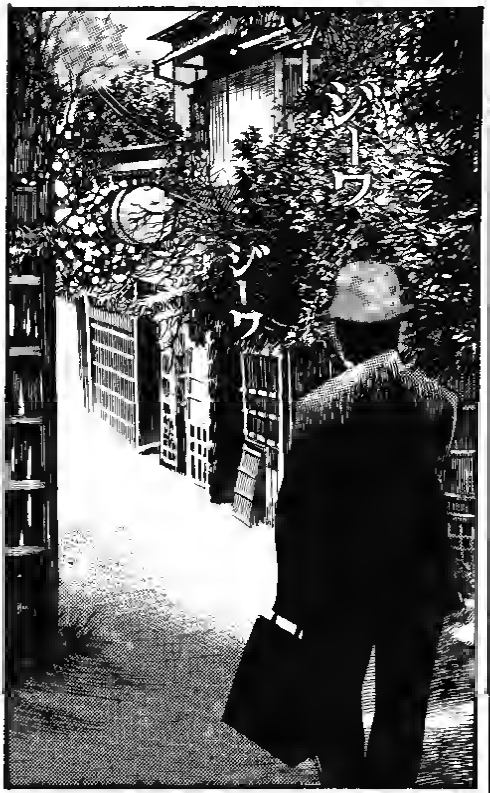
THIS ISN'T TO BE MISSED!

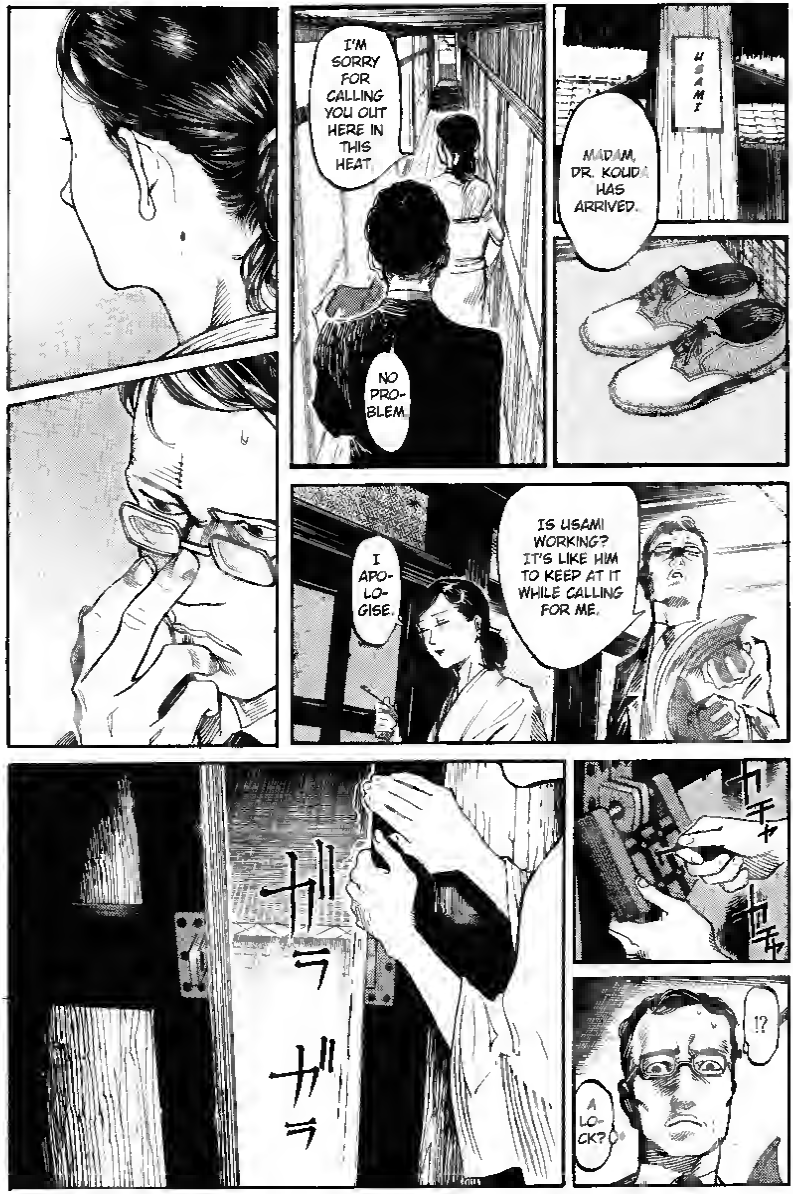
IN THIS WORLD THERE ARE AMAZING "TWIN SIBLINGS"
AND THIS IS THE START OF THEIR AMAZING LOVE STORY!

COME ALONG!

COME ALONG!

THE 12TH YEAR OF THE TAISHO ERA (1923), AUGUST




I'M SORRY FOR CALLING YOU OUT HERE IN THIS HEAT.
NO PRO-BLEM.
USAMI
MADAM, DR. KOUDA HAS ARRIVED.
I APO-LO-GISE.
IS USAMI WORKING? IT'S LIKE HIM TO KEEP AT IT WHILE CALLING FOR ME.
カチャ
カチャ
!?
A LO-CK?

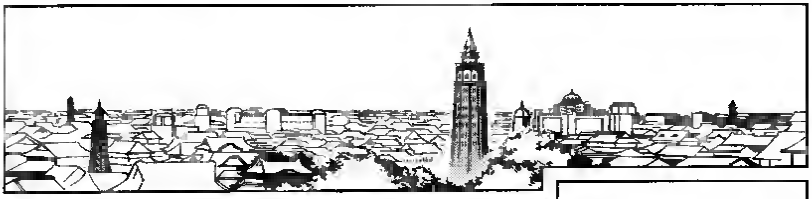
THESE ARE NONOKO AND NIJIHIKO.

……
……
ベタ
ベタ
……
DOCTOR, WHEN WILL NONOKO WAKE UP?
HMM…
ドン
ドン

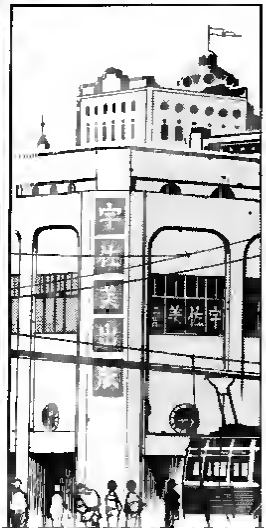
I REALLY DO FEEL FOR YOU... MADAM...

ON FAIR DAYS YOU REALLY SHOULD LET THEM OUT FOR SOME SUNSHINE AS LONG AS YOU CAN.
WE REALLY ARE GRATEFUL.

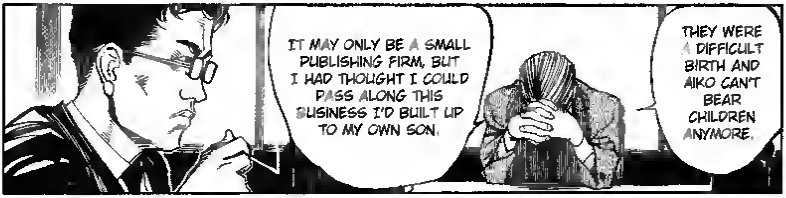
I'M SURE YOUR SISTER WILL ONE DAY WAKE UP.
NIJIHIKO-KUN, IF YOU TALK GENTLY TO HER EVERY DAY ...



FIVE DOCTORS HAVE GIVEN THEM UP AS HOPELESS, CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING?


宇佐美出張

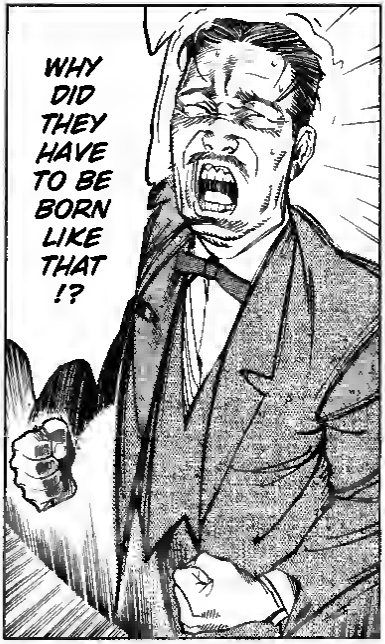
SHE'S ALMOST LIKE SLEEPING BEAUTY.
SINCE SHE WAS BORN, NONOKO HAS REMAINED UNCONSCIOUS.


IT MAY ONLY BE A SMALL PUBLISHING FIRM, BUT I HAD THOUGHT I COULD PASS ALONG THIS BUSINESS I'D BUILT UP TO MY OWN SON.
THEY WERE A DIFFICULT BIRTH AND AIKO CAN'T BEAR CHILDREN ANYMORE.

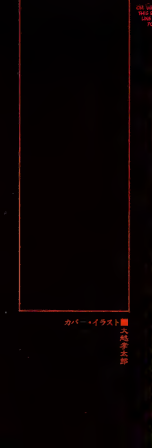
ISN'T OUR RELATION-SHIP DEEPER THAN THAT?
WHY DIDN'T YOU TALK TO ME SOONER ?

I WAS.. ASHAMED ...

USAMI ...


WHY DID THEY HAVE TO BE BORN LIKE THAT !?

JAPAN
KOU-DA ...
SO RIGHT NOW I CAN'T PROMISE THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING, BUT AS YOUR FRIEND AND AS A DOCTOR I WANT TO DO SOMETHING.
I'VE HEARD OF CASES LIKE NIJIHIKO-KUN AND NONOKO-CHAN'S, BUT THIS IS MY FIRST TIME EXAMINING ONE MYSELF.
THIS WAY, SIR.
?
PLEASE COME AND HAVE A LITTLE PEAK INSIDE
OH, NOW HERE'S A GOOD LOOKING MAN!



カバー・イラスト
大越孝太郎

彼らは二人であって一人だ。
同じ日に生まれ、同じ日に死ぬ。

表紙絵
定価[本体]一〇〇円
税

THE TWO ARE ONE
BORN ON THE SAME
DAY, THEY WILL DIE
ON THE SAME DAY.

ISBN4-7926-0360-9
C0979 ¥1100E

THE LOVE THAT BINDS US TO HEAVEN

1

KOUTAROU OHKOSHI

THE TWO ARE ONE. BORN ON THE SAME DAY, THEY WILL DIE ON THE SAME DAY.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT! I KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP WANTING TO SEE THIS, MISTER!

WH- WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING?! THIS ISN'T RE-SPECTABLE! STOP IT!

PLEASE COME LOOK.
コッタ コタッ

STOP IT!
DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME!

10月10日

PLEASE STOP !!
I'M BEG-GING YOU ...

カタン
VROOOM! THE FIRST PLANE SWOOPS!

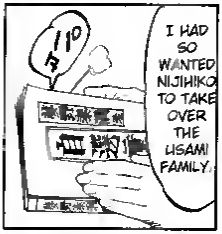
BUT YOUR FATHER'S NOT HOME YET.
IS IT? THANK YOU.
MOTHER, THE BATH IS READY.
カッチ
カッチ
コッチ
コッチ
AL-RIGHT
SO GO IN TOGETHER WITH NIJIHIKO AND NONOKO FIRST.
THE BATH WILL GET COLD, MINAMO.
EVEN THOUGH I'M WARM, ISN'T THAT STRANGE ?
BIG SIS, NONOKO'S BODY IS REALLY COLD...

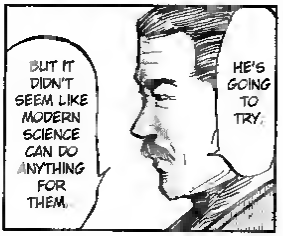
40
38
39
BE CAREFUL THAT NONOKO'S FACE DOESN'T GO UNDER THE WATER.
R-REALLY? ISN'T THAT GOOD...
TODAY A NEW DOCTOR CAME AND HE SAID IF I SPOKE GENTLY TO NONOKO EVERY DAY SHE'D DEFINITELY WAKE UP ONE DAY.
ハァハァ
OKAY, I'LL WASH YOU NOW SO COME OUT.

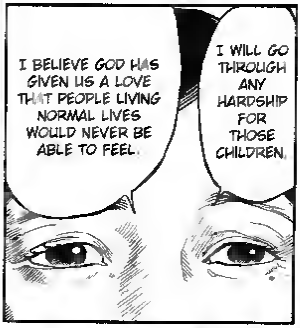
I WISH WE COULD GO OUTSIDE, I'D HOLD UP NONOKO'S BODY AND GO WALKING AND PLAY. YOU'D BE WITH US TOO, BIG SIS.
THAT WOULD BE NICE.

IF WE DIED RIGHT THIS INSTANT, HOW WOULD THAT BROTHER AND SISTER GO ON LIVING?
USAMI
1923
8月
AUGUST
31日
FRIDAY.
金曜日

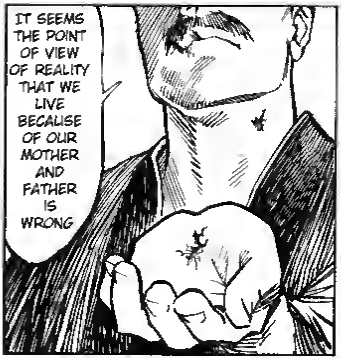
IS THAT WHAT KOUDA-SAMA SAID?
SOCIETY ISN'T SO TOLERANT THAT IT WOULD WARMLY WELCOME PEOPLE LIKE THEM.


I HAD SO WANTED NIJIHIKO TO TAKE OVER THE USAMI FAMILY.


BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE MODERN SCIENCE CAN DO ANYTHING FOR THEM.
HE'S GOING TO TRY.

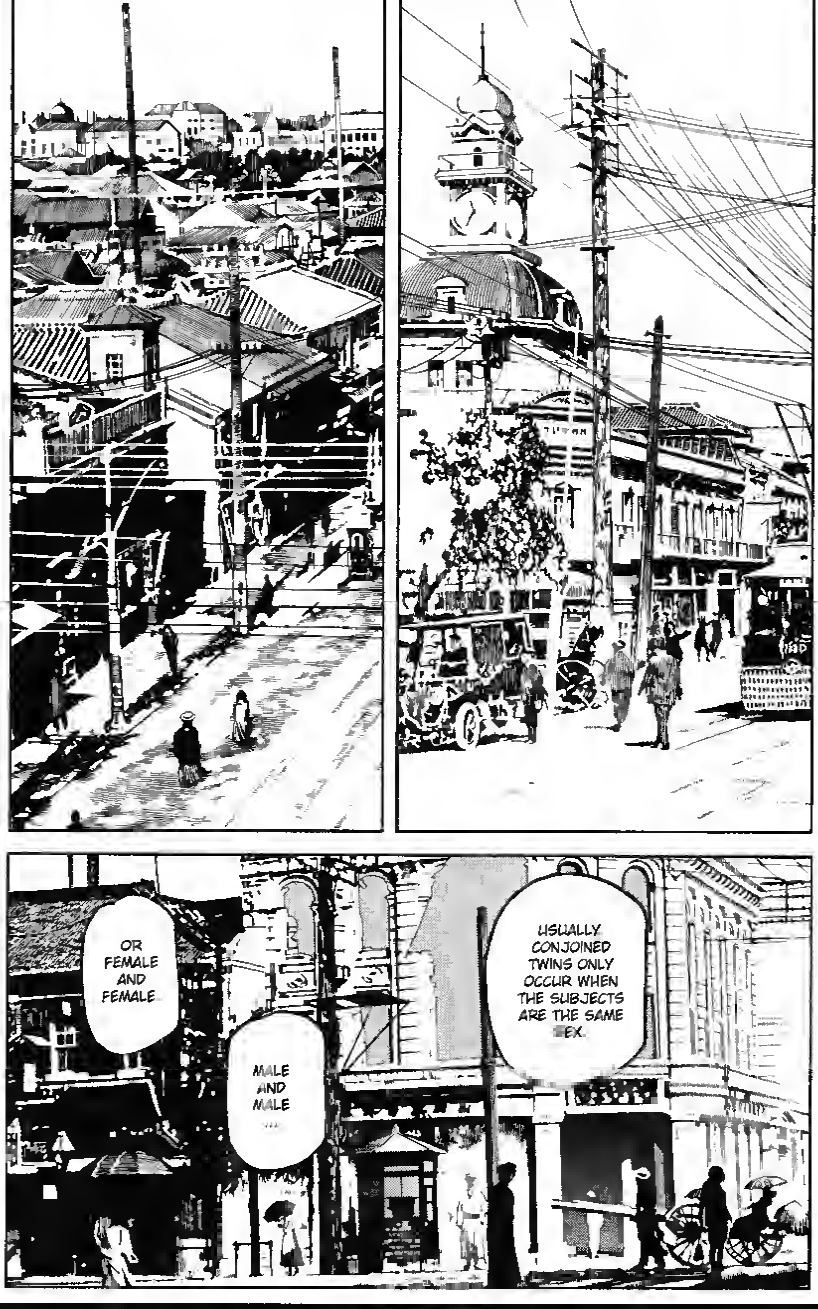

I BELIEVE GOD HAS GIVEN US A LOVE THAT PEOPLE LIVING NORMAL LIVES WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO FEEL.
I WILL GO THROUGH ANY HARDSHIP FOR THOSE CHILDREN.

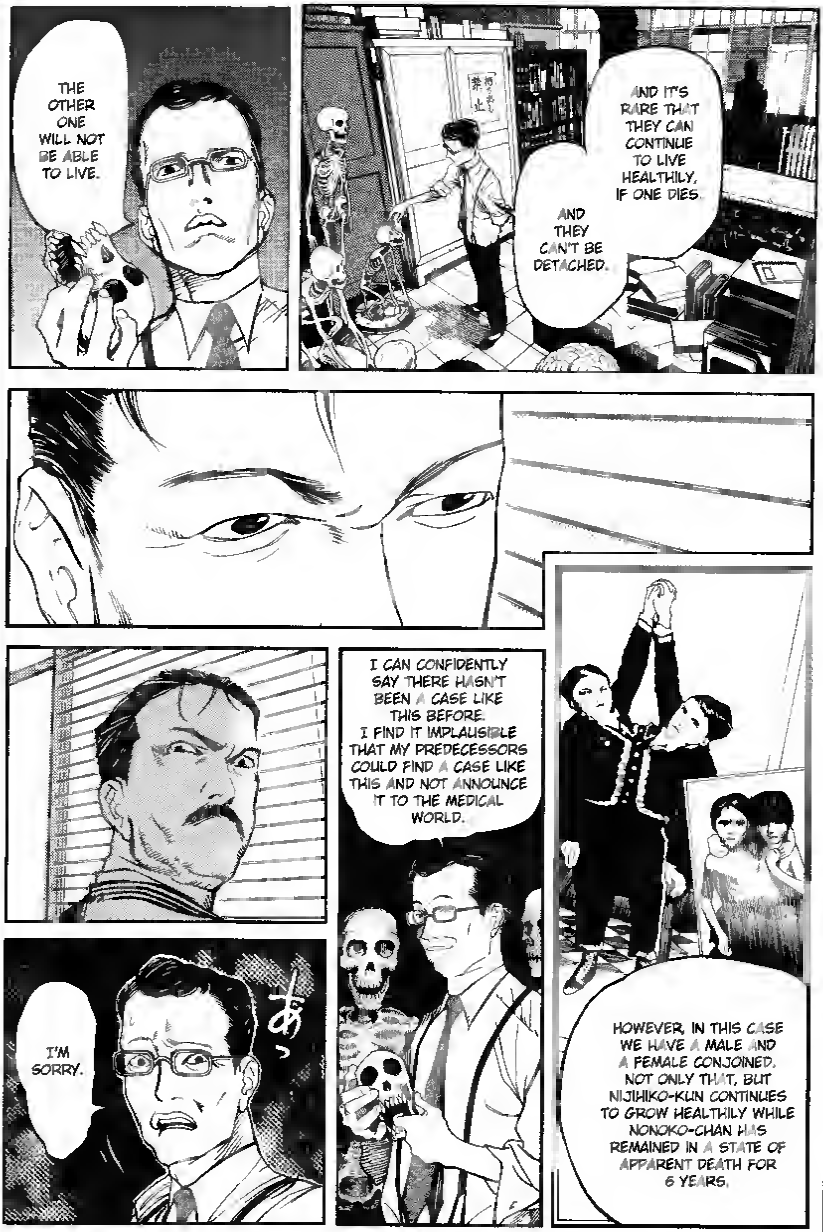
I THINK IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO TURN THIS OBSTACLE INTO STRONG BONDS THAT CONNECT OUR FAMILY THAN TO WORRY ABOUT NONOKO SLEEPING FOREVER OR NIJIHIKO NOT BEING ABLE TO BE SEPARATED FROM HER.


IT SEEMS THE POINT OF VIEW OF REALITY THAT WE LIVE BECAUSE OF OUR MOTHER AND FATHER IS WRONG

GOD?

HAH! IT'S SO HOT!
IT'S SO HOT, I'M STICKY ALL OVER.
ジワ
ジワ
ジワ
ジワ
NONO-KO...
AND THE SWEAT MAKES ME ITCHY.
BUT YOU CAN'T SCRATCH YOUR-SELF, CAN YOU, NONO-KO?


USUALLY CONJOINED TWINS ONLY OCCUR WHEN THE SUBJECTS ARE THE SAME SEX.
MALE AND MALE ...
OR FEMALE AND FEMALE

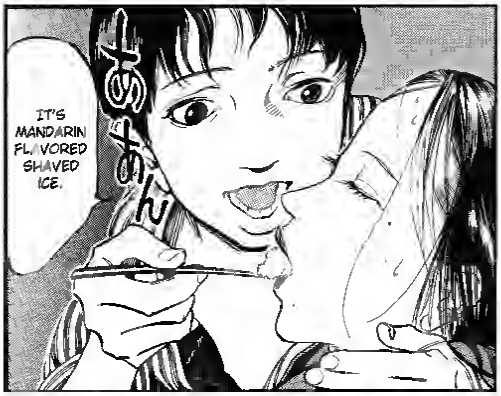

THE OTHER ONE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO LIVE.
AND IT'S RARE THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO LIVE HEALTHILY, IF ONE DIES.
AND THEY CAN'T BE DETACHED.
I CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY THERE HASN'T BEEN A CASE LIKE THIS BEFORE. I FIND IT IMPLAUSIBLE THAT MY PREDECESSORS COULD FIND A CASE LIKE THIS AND NOT ANNOUNCE IT TO THE MEDICAL WORLD.
HOWEVER, IN THIS CASE WE HAVE A MALE AND A FEMALE CONJOINED, NOT ONLY THAT, BUT NIJIHIKO-KUN CONTINUES TO GROW HEALTHILY WHILE NONOKO-CHAN HAS REMAINED IN A STATE OF APPARENT DEATH FOR 6 YEARS.
I'M SORRY.
あっ

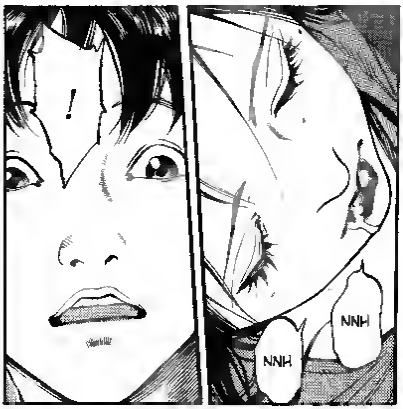
JUST NIJI-HIKO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FOR ARGUMENT'S SAKE, IF YOU DID SEPARATE THEM, WHAT WOULD BE THE CHANCE OF YOU SAVING HIM?
FROM MY EXAMINATION YESTERDAY, I ASCERTAINED EACH OF THEIR PELVISES AND GLUTEUS MEDIUS MUSCLES ARE CONNECTED, BUT I'D NEED TO EXAMINE THEM IN A UNIVERSITY LABORATORY TO FIND OUT MORE.
IT'S MIDDAY, LET'S HAVE SOME EEL TO EAT. I FOUND A GOOD PLACE THE OTHER DAY
I INTEND TO SAVE BOTH OF THEM.
DON'T SAY THINGS THAT WOULD SADDEN AIKO-SAN.
IF IT'S AN HEIR YOU WANT, WHY NOT WELCOME IN YOUR SON-IN-LAW, MIN-MO-CHAN'S HUSBAND?

BUT THE RICKSHAW MAN IS WAITING FOR ME
HE COMES TO PICK YOU UP? MISS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER OF THE COMPANY PRESIDENT
MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT CARRIED OFF BY AN INSOLENT MAN
カフェー
MINAMO! DO YOU WANT TO HAVE SOME TOKOROTEN AND THEN GO HOME?
TOKOROTEN? THAT SOUNDS DELICIOUS!
RIGHT NOW I'D RATHER EAT TOKOROTEN THAN BE DRIVEN AROUND
SORRY, IF I DON'T GET YOU BACK ON TIME, THE MASTER WILL SCOLD ME.
SORRY, SORRY.
OH MY.

PREPARATIONS FOR LUNCH WILL SOON BE FINISHED. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?
I WAS THINKING OF BATHING NIJIHIKO AND NONOKO.
PLEASE FETCH SOME WATER
ハロ
ハロ

ジュウウウ


IT'S MANDARIN FLAVORED SHAVED ICE.
あむ


!
NNH
NNH

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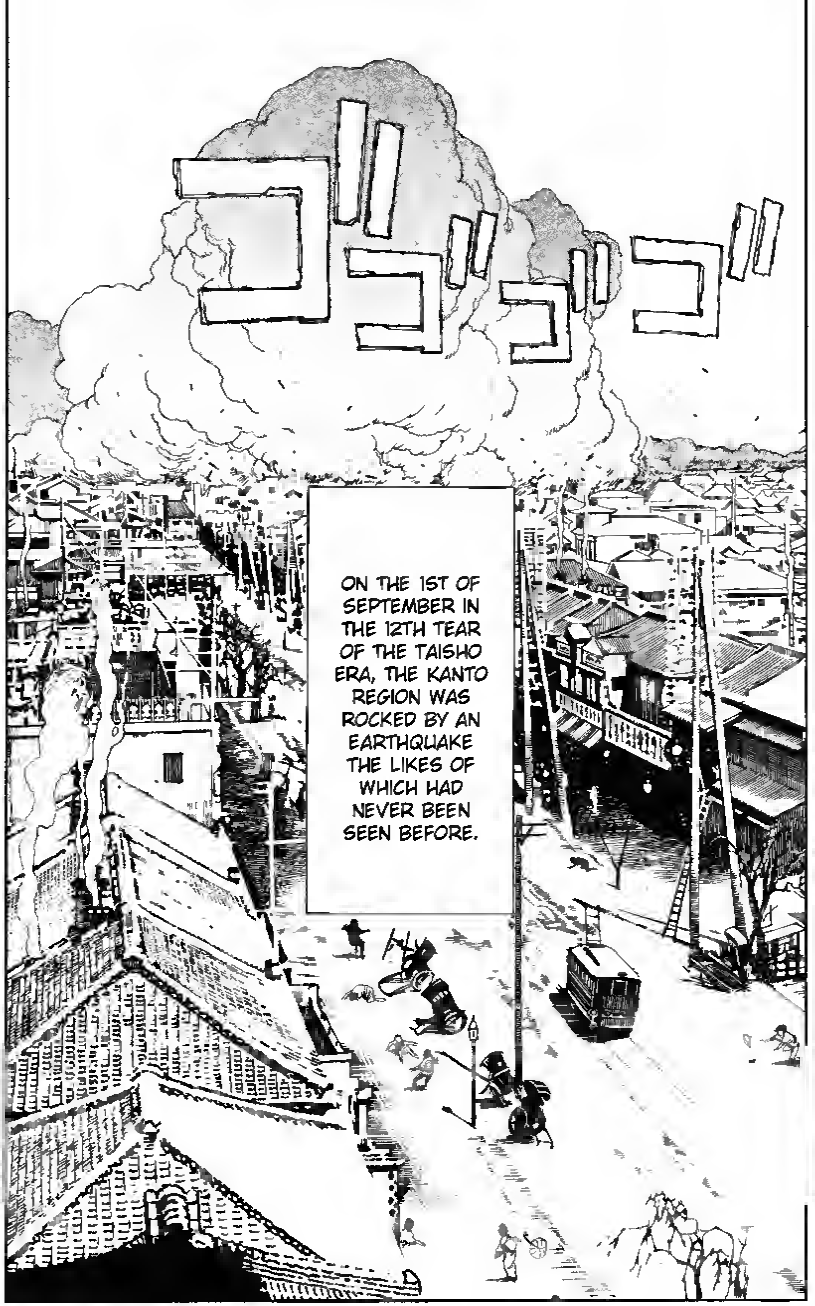
NH
HNN
NO... NO... NONO...
MOTHER! IT'S NONOKO!
NONO-KO IS.
ウッ
ンッンッンッ

12

OH, AND I'LL HAVE ONE BROILED EEL OVER RICE.
!?
HEAVE-HO!
HEAVE-HO!
HEAVE-HO!
COULD THERE BE SOME-THING IN THE WELL ?


ゴゴゴゴゴ
ON THE 1ST OF SEPTEMBER IN THE 12TH YEAR OF THE TAISHO ERA, THE KANTO REGION WAS ROCKED BY AN EARTHQUAKE THE LIKES OF WHICH HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE.

ズズズズ
ズズズズ
ズズズズ

ゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴゴゴ
ボーン
MIS-TRE-SS!!
LET US OUT OF HERE!
MO-THER!! OPEN THE DOOR!
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING!! I'M SCARED!

THE KOISHI-GAWA DISTRICT'S ARMY SUPPLIES
ウウウ
COLONEL! ARE YOU SAFE?
EARTH-QUAKE ?
IF YOU'RE ABLE TO MOVE, LOOK FOR IN-JURED PEOPLE.
OW ...
CON-FIRM THE CAUSE WITH HEAD-QUART-ERS.
THAT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN AN ATTACK, RIGHT?
IT'S NO GOOD, THE PHONE ISN'T WORKING.
THEN GO THERE YOUR-SELF!
WH-WHAT IS THIS...

OF COURSE YOU DON'T!
KOUDA, I DON'T WANT TO DIE YET.
DAMN IT! WHY DOES THIS POST HAVE TO BE SO HEAVY ?!
I CAN'T DIE!
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE CHILDREN IF I DIE!?
L-
LOOK AFTER... MY SON!
US-AMI !!
WAH
ARGH

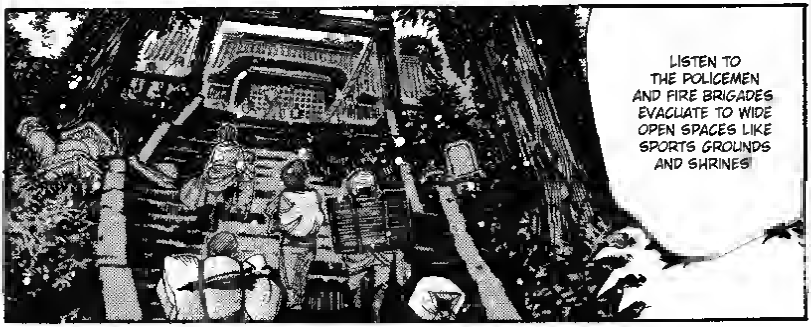
USAMI !!
I'LL PROTECT YOU, NONOKO, I'M RIGHT HERE.
NH
NH
WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF THIS ROOM!
RUN, NONO-KO!
ンム
ンム
AH
THE WALL!
WE CAN'T GET OUT ...

LITTLE MASTER, HELP ME! IT'S SO HOT!!
HYAA
SOME-ONE, HELP ME!
ゴオオオ
IT'S SHAKING AGAIN!
スズズ
WE CAN'T GET OUT OF HERE!!
YUKIE! PLEASE DON'T DIE!
スズズズズズ
WATER!
WATER!
SHIGE-SAN!
BIG SIS!
MO-THER, WHERE ARE YOU!?
OH NO OH NO ...
ドドド
AARGH!

ドォォォ
OUR HOUSE!!
RUN AWAY, YOU TWO! THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO NOW
AA-AH!
じゃん じゃん じゃん

ゴゴゴゴ

RUN UPWIND! THERE'S NO TIME TO BRING YOUR POSSESSIONS! WORRY FOR YOUR LIVES!


LISTEN TO THE POLICEMEN AND FIRE BRIGADES EVACUATE TO WIDE OPEN SPACES LIKE SPORTS GROUNDS AND SHRINES!

THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL'S ON FIRE, IT LOOKS LIKE HELL DOWN THERE
LOOK! THE TWELVE STORY TOWER* IS FALLING!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS WHAT THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS LIKE. .
KANDA AND ASAKUSA ARE COMPLETELY DESTROYED!! YOU HAVE TO RUN AWAY TO KOMAGOME OR KOISHIGAWA. HONGO IS DANGEROUS TOO!

*TN: NICKNAME FOR RYOUNKAKU, LITERALLY THE "CLOUD-SURPASSING PAVILION", A 50 METER OCTAGONAL RED-BRICK BUILDING CONSTRUCTED IN 1890, THE TWELVE STORIES WAS THE TALLEST BUILDING IN TOKYO AND THE ONLY STRUCTURE WITH A PASSENGER ELEVATOR BEFORE THE 1923 EARTHQUAKE. (THE SCARLET GANG OF ASAKUSA BY YASUNARI KAWABATA, P. 215)

KIN-SAN!
WAKE UP!
MISS... RUN... UGH!
COME ON, KIN-SAN!
KIN-SAN!!
AAGH!
ボワン
COUGH
COUGH

THIS SHRINE'S OFFICE IS BEING USED AS AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLACE..
ONE HOUR UNTIL SUNSET. PEOPLE WHO HAVE BECOME SEPARATED FROM YOUR FAMILIES, PLEASE GIVE YOUR NAMES
!?
S- STOMACH... WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR STOMACHS?
ARE YOU TWO OKAY? IS SHE HURT?
UM, MY STOMACH IS EMPTY

SOMEHOW IT HASN'T COME HERE.
THE FIRE'S BURNING BRIGHT RED AS FAR AS HONJO.
I CAN'T STAND THE MOSQUITOES.
FOR NOW WE SHOULD JUST SLEEP IN THE THICKET.
IF THERE'S MORE AFTER-SHOCKS, WE MIGHT NOT BE SAFE HERE EITHER.
I'M USAMI NIJIHIKO. MY SISTER IS NONOKO. TODAY'S THE FIRST TIME WE'VE LEFT OUR HOUSE. SO I DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE
WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHERE'S YOUR FAMILY?
THEY'RE SWEET POTATOES, YOU CAN EAT THEM.
.....
I WAS TRYING TO LET MY MOTHER KNOW ABOUT IT WHEN
NONOKO HASN'T WOKEN UP ONCE SINCE WE WERE BORN, BUT TODAY SHE MADE SOME SOUNDS FOR THE FIRST TIME SHE'S ASLEEP AGAIN NOW THOUGH.

AND IF ANYONE COMES, DON'T COME OUT FROM UNDER THE BLANKET.
WHY NOT?
SLEEP HERE FOR TONIGHT. I'VE STILL GOT THINGS TO DO, SO I CAN'T STAY WITH YOU.
BUT I'LL COME AGAIN TOMORROW MORNING.
OKAY, I WILL
THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE WHO WOULD BE UNKIND TO YOU. PROTECT YOUR SISTER AT ALL COSTS.
DON'T DIE, DAD!
BURNING? I HEARD A RUMOUR THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE GOING AROUND IN ALL THIS CONFUSION, SPREADING THE FIRE.
BUT IT'S BURNING WELL.

ガガガ
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN HIDDEN INSIDE THEIR HOUSE BECAUSE THEY'RE DISABLED. SHOULD I BE HELPING THEM?
ガガガ
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.

I CAN'T STAY UNDER THERE, IT'S TOO HOT AND MUGGY.
PWA!
DAD AND EVERYONE WILL BE LOOKING FOR US, I'M SURE
YOU KNOW, KAGUYAHIME, SHE WAS BORN INSIDE A BAMBOO STALK...
I WONDER IF THE MOON WAS LIKE THIS ON THAT NIGHT?

ムズムズ
ムズムズ
HAH

ACHOO!!
UWAA!!
NO-NO-KO
WAAAAH
NO-NO-KO...
WAAAAH
NO-NO...
NO
KO
NO
EH
EH
EH
EH

I- I KNEW YOU'D WAKE UP ONE DAY!

FINALLY!
WAAAAAH!

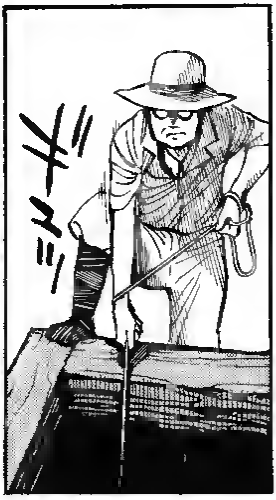
THREE DAYS LATER
USAMI'S HOUSE WAS AROUND HERE BUT I DOUBT ANYONE'S ALIVE.
THIS ENTIRE ROW OF HOUSES HAS BEEN LEVELLED.
HE WAS SAYING THE MAID FELL INTO THE WELL ...
宇佐美
ガラン

SIGN: USAMI

オーン
ウクック
オーン
ウクック
I GUESS HE MUST HAVE MEANT THIS ONE.

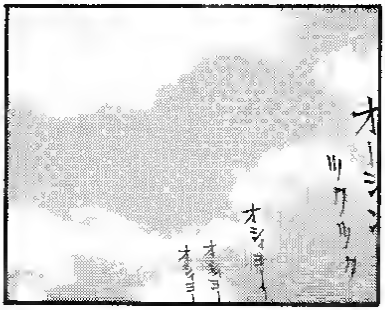
THERE'S SOMETHING CAUGHT ON THE ROPE.

IT'S A PERSON! PLEASE BE ALIVE!


ミシ
ミシ

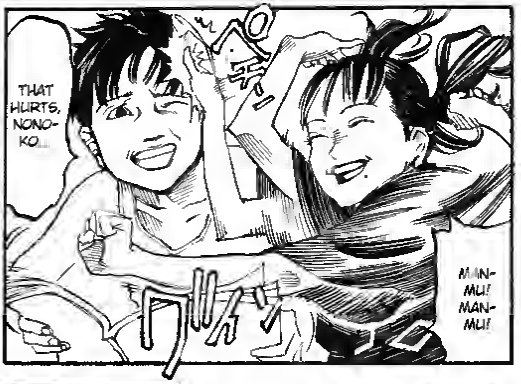
TH- THIS ISN'T THE MAID.

IS IT THEIR MOTHER ?


オシシシ
ヤヤヤ
オシシヨー
オシシヨー
オシシヨー

DA!
DA!
MA!

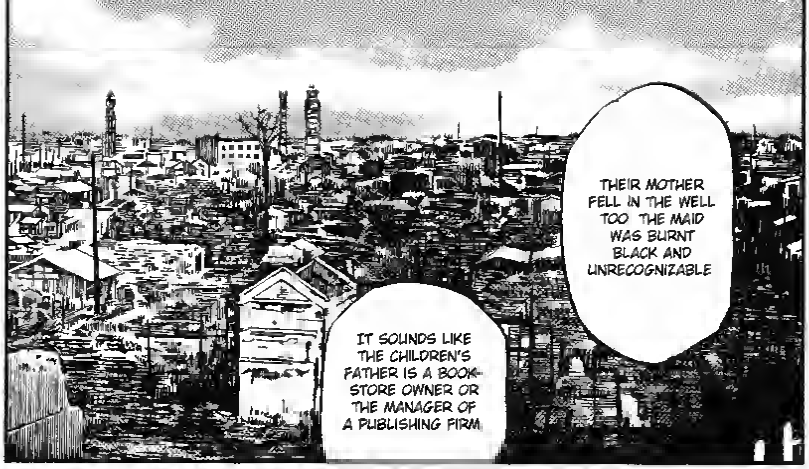
YAH!
YAH!

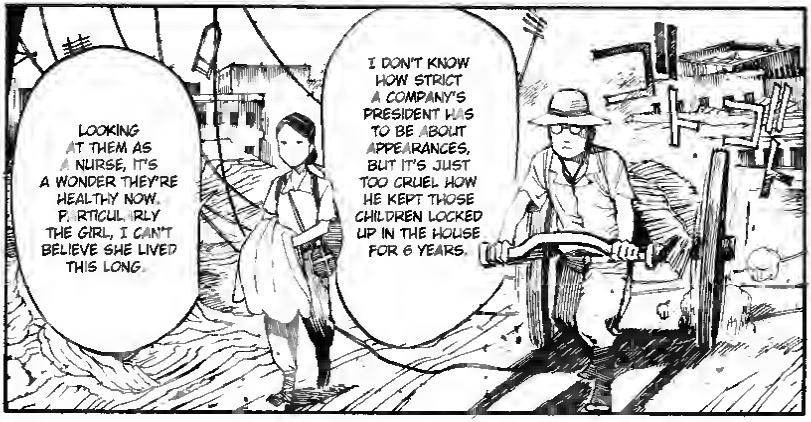

THAT HURTS, NONO-KO...
MAN-MU! MAN-MU!

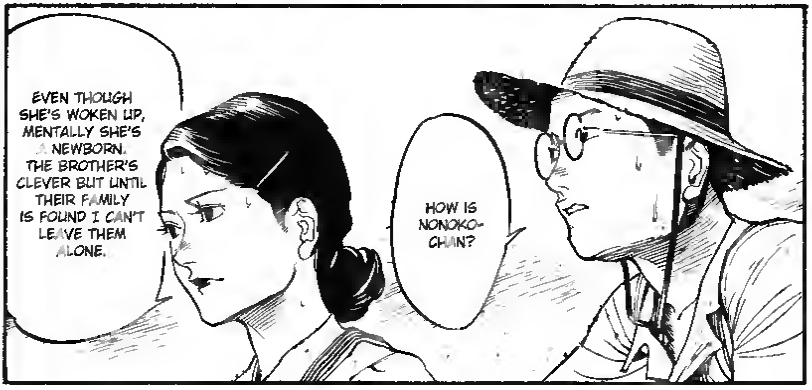
.....
MY FATHER MAKES BOOKS AT HIS COMPANY.
YOU CAN READ THE KANJI IN THAT BOOK? AMAZING!

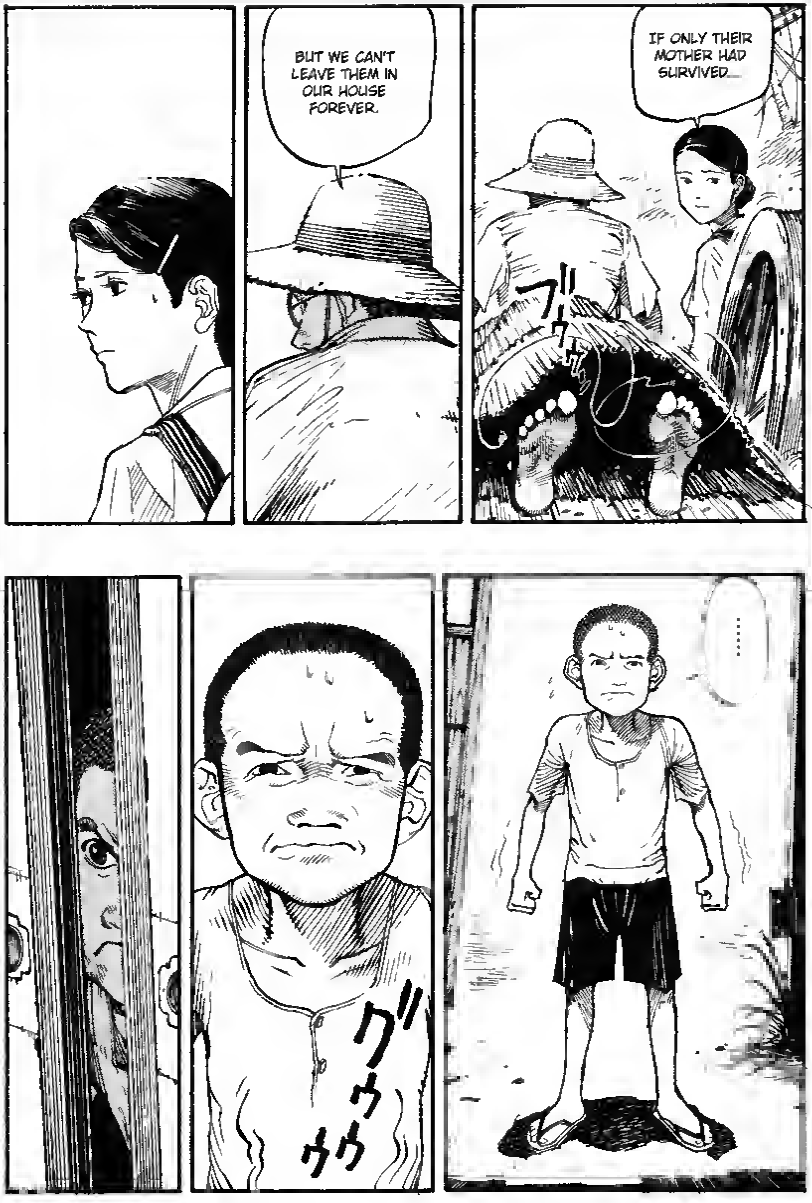
WELL, HAVEN'T YOU PERKED UP! IS HER NAPPY STILL OKAY?
MA!
MA!

IF SOMETHING'S TROUBLING YOU, PLEASE TELL MY BOY ABOUT IT.
I HAVE TO GO TO WORK NOW, BUT I WANT YOU TWO TO STAY HERE BECAUSE MY HUSBAND IS OUT LOOKING FOR YOUR FAMILY.
IF YOU GET HUNGRY, THERE'S RICE AND PUMPKIN BOILED IN SOY SAUCE IN THE KITCHEN. ONLY LET NONOKO-CHAN DRINK A LITTLE
OKAY.
MOO
KAZUKI! YOU CAN'T HIDE AWAY FOREVER!
AAH!
ガタン
THE EARTH-QUAKE HAS MADE IT TOO DANGER-OUS OUT-SIDE, GET BACK IN HERE!
ぴゅう
WE'LL BE OKAY, WE'RE USED TO BEING ALONE.
OKAY, I'LL BE BACK LATER
給水
衛


IT SOUNDS LIKE THE CHILDREN'S FATHER IS A BOOK-STORE OWNER OR THE MANAGER OF A PUBLISHING FIRM.
THEIR MOTHER FELL IN THE WELL TOO. THE MAID WAS BURNT BLACK AND UNRECOGNIZABLE


I DON'T KNOW HOW STRICT A COMPANY'S PRESIDENT HAS TO BE ABOUT APPEARANCES, BUT IT'S JUST TOO CRUEL HOW HE KEPT THOSE CHILDREN LOCKED UP IN THE HOUSE FOR 6 YEARS.
LOOKING AT THEM AS A NURSE, IT'S A WONDER THEY'RE HEALTHY NOW. P. RTICUL RLY THE GIRL, I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE LIVED THIS LONG.


HOW IS NONOKO-CHAN?
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S WOKEN UP, MENTALLY SHE'S A NEWBORN. THE BROTHER'S CLEVER BUT UNTIL THEIR FAMILY IS FOUND I CAN'T LEAVE THEM ALONE.


BUT WE CAN'T LEAVE THEM IN OUR HOUSE FOREVER.
IF ONLY THEIR MOTHER HAD SURVIVED.....
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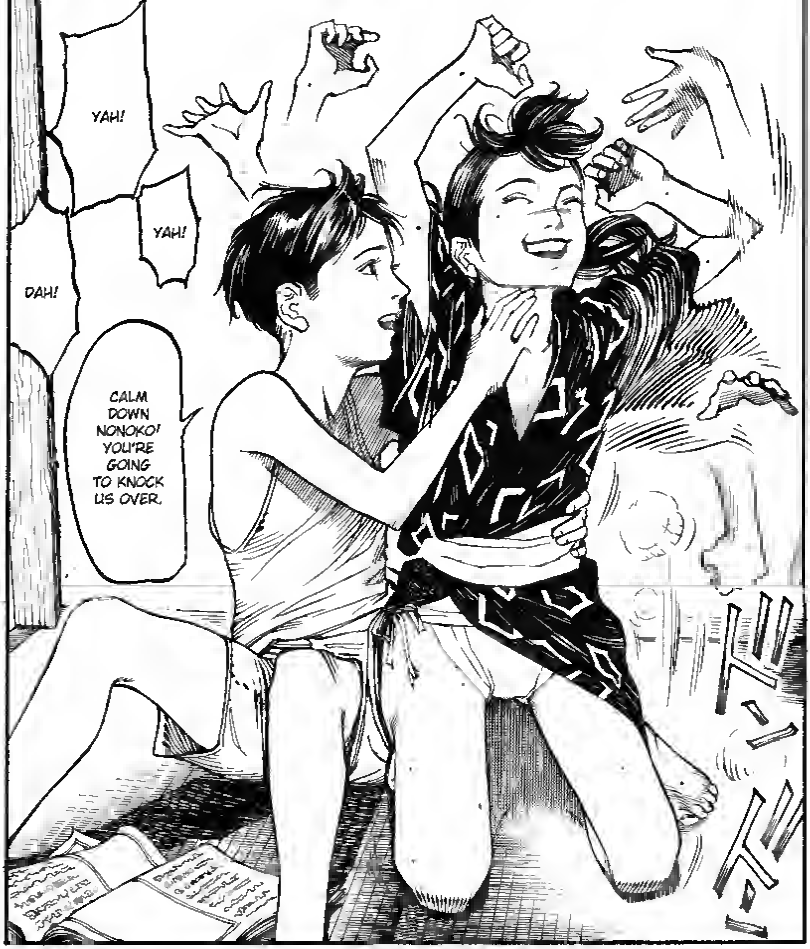
.....


YAH!
YAH!
DAH!
CALM DOWN NONOKO! YOU'RE GOING TO KNOCK US OVER.
ドーン

WHAT ARE THEY DOING WEARING MY CLOTHES ...
I'VE NEVER SEEN PEOPLE LIKE THEM BEFORE.

YEAH
.....
ARE YOU REALLY TWINS?
HOW MUCH OF YOU'S A GUY AND HOW MUCH OF YOU'S A GIRL?
WHO'S OLDER AND WHO'S YOUNGER?
I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
I DON'T KNOW.
IF I STUCK A CHOPSTICK IN THE MIDDLE BIT, WHO'D FEEL IT?
MUM WILL FIX YOU UP IF YOU BLEED.
NO! STOP THAT, KAZUKI-KUN!
THEN LET'S TRY IT!

ぐいっ
YOU'RE WEARING MY CLOTHES AND EATING MY FOOD, YOU'LL DO WHAT I SAY OR I'LL THROW YOU OUT!
OW!
WAAH...
AAAH!
ST-OP!
ガラララ
I'M HOME.

WHAT HAP-PENED HERE ?
DAD, HE STAB-BED ME!
WAAH !!
WAAH !!

YOU'RE RIGHT, I'M SORRY.
YOU HAVEN'T SLEPT. GO HOME AND REST. WE'RE NO USE TO ANYONE IF WE COLLAPSE.
ARGH!
KILL THE PYRO!
IT'S A KOREAN!
CATCH HIM!
THERE HE IS!

AND THEN YOU HIT HIM?
.....
YOU DIDN'T EVEN QUESTION KAZUKI'S STORY?
NO! I JUST HIT HIM! I WAS ANGRY!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT !?
KAZUKI TRIED SOMETHING ON THOSE CHILDREN OUT OF CURIOSITY. THAT BOY ISN'T THE TYPE TO START SOMETHING HIMSELF.
WHAT ?
YOU DIDN'T LOOK AT THEIR BODY. THERE'S A MARK WHERE THEIR HIPS MEET THAT LOOKS LIKE KAZUKI STABBED THEM WITH SOMETHING.
I SUPPOSE I DON'T.
IT WOULD BE HARDER IF I BECAME ATTACHED ...
YOU DON'T CALL NIJIHIKO-KUN OR NONOKO-CHAN BY THEIR NAMES.

HAH... I'M SO HUNGRY ...
DON'T YOU HATE IT? THE ARMY HAS BAMBOO CHOPSTICKS AND GOLD BOWLS, IT'S PATHETIC THAT EVEN BUDDHA DOESN'T HAVE A BIG BOWL OF RICE.
PEW
PEW
?
YUCK !!
CHOMP
PLUCK
VERY SUSPICIOUS!
SANPEI! GO GET AN ADULT!
HEY, DID YOU SEE? HE JUST ATE A LEAF!
カサカサ

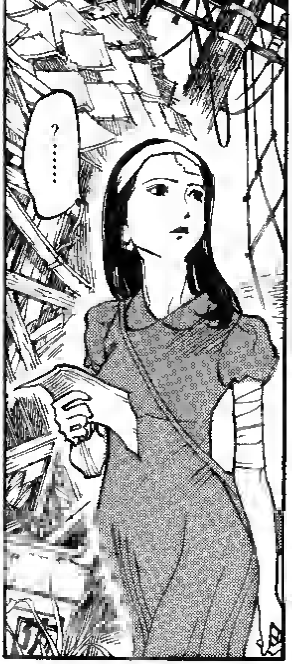
?!
THEY EAT LEAVES AND THEY'RE ALWAYS SIDE-BY-SIDE!
WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT? THEY'RE JUST KIDS!
BUT THEY'RE NOT RIGHT!
I'M SURE THEY'RE UP TO NO GOOD!
SAY PA PI PU PE PO.
IS THAT SOMETHING KIDS WOULD CARE ABOUT? THEY BURNT MY MUM AND SISTER TO DEATH!
ARE THEY KOREANS?
JAPANESE WOULDN'T SIT DOWN ON O-IN IRI-SAN'S FOX.
YOUR TURN NOW. SAY GA GI GU GE GO!
NONOKO ONLY JUST WOKE UP, SHE CAN'T SAY THAT!
PA-PA PI PU... PE PO.
WHAT? UM...

YOU'RE RIGHT, THE GIRL'S SUSPICIOUS
THERE'S A HOLE RIGHT HERE, LET'S BURY HER UPSIDE DOWN!
COME ON! SEPARATE! YOU BASTARDS!
AH! WHAT IS THIS!?
OOH!

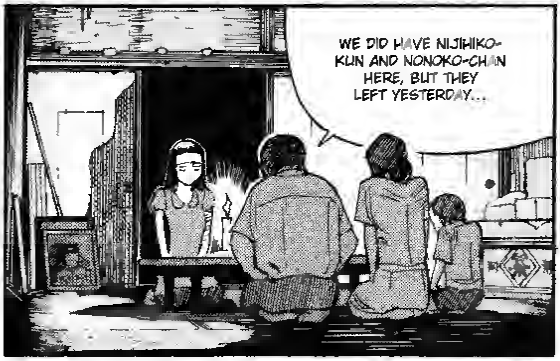
HEY THERE, WAIT A MINUTE!
I KNOW THEM.
WHAT DO YOU WANT!? GET OUT OF HERE!
HEY NOW, HEAR ME OUT!
MY FAMILY WAS SPLIT UP IN THE BIG EARTHQUAKE. I WAS WONDERING WHERE THEY WERE, AND SEARCHING....
THIS IS MY OIKKO, AND THIS IS MEIKKO I'M THEIR FATHER AND THEY ARE GENUINE JAPANESE.
THEY'RE REALLY GOOD KIDS, THEY WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING BAD.
MISTER, DO YOU KNOW WHERE OUR FATHER AND MOTHER ARE?
YES, THEY'RE AT MY HOUSE. THEY'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
OU MUST BE PART OF THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE, HUNTING DOWN THOSE VILLAINS. IT MUST BE HARD WORK.
IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT LET ME OFFER YOU THIS.
W-WELL, IF THAT'S HOW IT IS.
.....

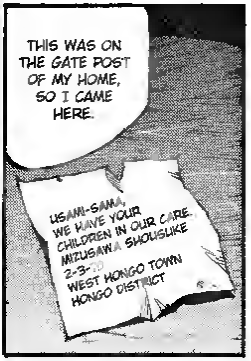
IT'S OKAY NOW, LET'S GO TO YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.
バサバサ
カァ

HEY, LITTLE BOY, IS THE MIZUSAWA HOUSE SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE?
HUH ?


?……

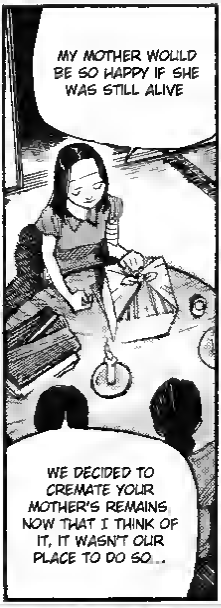
YEAH …


WE DID HAVE NIJIHIKO-KUN AND NONOKO-CHAN HERE, BUT THEY LEFT YESTERDAY…


THIS WAS ON THE GATE POST OF MY HOME, SO I CAME HERE.
HIGAMI-SAMA, WE HAVE YOUR CHILDREN IN OUR CARE. MIZUSAWA SHOULSIKE 2-3-[illegible] WEST HONGO TOWN HONGO DISTRICT

SO… MY LITTLE SISTER WOKE UP.

I'M SOR-RY
YOU APOLO-GISE TOO
IT'S MY FAU-LT


MY MOTHER WOULD BE SO HAPPY IF SHE WAS STILL ALIVE
WE DECIDED TO CREMATE YOUR MOTHER'S REMAINS NOW THAT I THINK OF IT, IT WASN'T OUR PLACE TO DO SO...

SHE WAS LIKE A BABY, BUT I THINK HER BODY WAS JUST AS DEVELOPED AS NIJIHIKO-KUN'S. SHE WAS ABLE TO HOLD HER HEAD UP BY HERSELF AND SHE COULD SEE.

NO, I'M VERY THANKFUL TO YOU, EVEN JUST FOR LETTING ME KNOW MY SIBLINGS ARE ALIVE
I'M SURE... I'LL BE ABLE TO FIND THEM EASILY ENOUGH CONSIDERING THE WAY THEY ARE.

OV-
ER
THE-
RE

YES,
THAT'S
RIGHT.
QUICKLY,
COME
INSIDE
IS THAT
TENT
YOUR
HOME?

AH!

!?
OUT OF THE WAY! IDIOT!
GET OUT OF THE WAY! NEW MEMBERS ARE COMING THROUGH!
KOUME! GET THESE BRATS SOME-THING TO EAT!

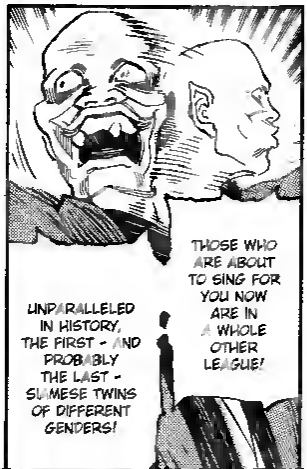
HOW WOULD I KNOW? SOME RESPECTABLE FOLKS PROBABLY HAD THEM HIDDEN IN A ROOM DEEP IN THEIR HOUSE. THEY'RE DEVIL CHILDREN. THIS EARTHQUAKE BROUGHT THEM INTO THE OPEN.
THEY'RE VERY RARE. I'VE BEEN AT THIS BUSINESS A LONG TIME AND THESE ARE THE FIRST MALE/FEMALE SIAMESE TWINS I'VE EVER SEEN. WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?
BUT WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE PEOPLE LINING UP WHEN THE CITY'S LIKE THIS
THEY'RE FINE JEWELS. IF YOU TRAIN THEM WELL, THEY'LL BE BIG MONEY MAKERS FOR YOU.
THEY'RE QUALITY GOODS. I'M A BIT JEALOUS. YOU CAN TELL THEY HAD GOOD PARENTS WHO HID THEM FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY.
THIS EARTH-QUAKE TOOK AND IT GAVE.
THAT'S TRUE. A SPECTACLE LIKE THEM RARELY FALLS INTO YOUR HANDS. THEY DON'T HAVE ANY WAY TO GET AWAY.
ABOUT THAT, I'VE BEEN THINKING OF GETTING OUT OF THE CITY UNTIL THINGS GET BACK TO NORMAL. WE'LL GO ON A PROVINCIAL TOUR WITH THE JUICHI TROUPE. PLUS, IF WE STAY HERE, IT'S LIKELY THESE KID'S PARENTS WILL COME FORWARD TO CLAIM THEM.

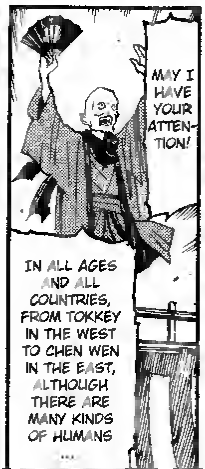
ガタガタ
TROUPE LEADER, EVERYONE'S ASSEMBLED
ALRIGHT!! LET'S GET GOING
YOU TWO! IF YOU DON'T RIDE QUIETLY, WE'LL LEAVE YOU IN THE MOUNTAINS ON OUR WAY TO YOUR MOTHER'S. GOT IT!?
ガタ、ゴト

FOUR
YEARS
LATER

COME ALONG!
COME ALONG TAKE A LOOK! YOU'LL NEVER SEE THE LIKES OF THIS SHOW AGAIN!
COME ALONG!

FIRE BREATHING! HERMAPHRODITES! PEOPLE WHO'LL EAT ANYTHING! JUICHI TROUPES' RARITIES AND FREAKS!


UNPARALLELED IN HISTORY, THE FIRST - AND PROBABLY THE LAST - SIAMESE TWINS OF DIFFERENT GENDERS!
THOSE WHO ARE ABOUT TO SING FOR YOU NOW ARE IN A WHOLE OTHER LEAGUE!

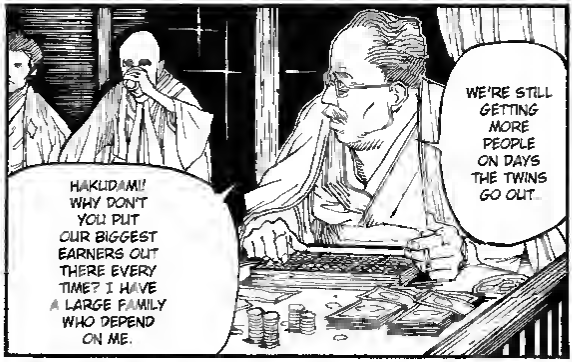

MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION!
IN ALL AGES AND ALL COUNTRIES, FROM TOKKEY IN THE WEST TO CHEN WEN IN THE EAST, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF HUMANS ...

AAAH!
ゴオッ

WITH BRIGHT BIG EYES AND FAIR SKIN
MY DOLL IS A GOOD DOLL
SUCH CHARMING LITTLE LIPS

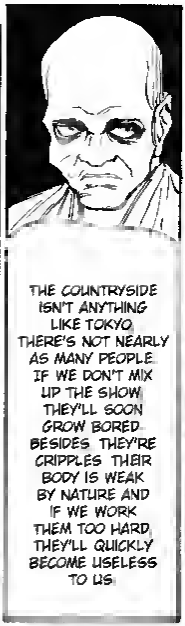
DON'T CALL IT KARMA, COMPARE THEM TO YOUR OWN CHILDREN AND SEE HOW THEY DIFFER.

MY DOLL IS A GOOD DOLL


HAKUDAMI! WHY DON'T YOU PUT OUR BIGGEST EARNERS OUT THERE EVERY TIME? I HAVE A LARGE FAMILY WHO DEPEND ON ME.
WE'RE STILL GETTING MORE PEOPLE ON DAYS THE TWINS GO OUT.

PAY YOUR ADMISSION AT THE GATE PLEASE COME AGAIN!
KUWA-BARA, KUWA-BARA.
IF YOU KEEP BEHAVING BADLY, YOU'LL BE REBORN LIKE THAT.
NO!
HONEY! PLEASE DON'T SAY THAT EVEN IN JEST.

TROUPE LEADER, HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT LAST YEAR A DWARF AND WHITE SNOW KICKED THE BUCKET AFTER CATCHING A COLD FROM DIRT SPIDER?


THE COUNTRYSIDE ISN'T ANYTHING LIKE TOKYO. THERE'S NOT NEARLY AS MANY PEOPLE. IF WE DON'T MIX UP THE SHOW, THEY'LL SOON GROW BORED. BESIDES, THEY'RE CRIPPLES. THEIR BODY IS WEAK BY NATURE AND IF WE WORK THEM TOO HARD, THEY'LL QUICKLY BECOME USELESS TO US.

I HAVE TO SUPPORT THEM, PUT YOURSELF IN MY SHOES.

THEN BELL CHILD BECAME BEFUDDLED BECAUSE HER COMPANION, WHITE SNOW, WAS GONE.

THOSE WITHOUT SKILL ARE ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY, BUT WE HAVE TO LOOK AFTER GOOD SPECTACLES.
?
OH!
IN THE END, SHE FORGOT HER DANCES AND WE JUST GAVE HER TO THE BROTHEL.
NONOKO HAS BEEN RUNNING A FEVER SINCE LAST NIGHT.
ARE THE TWINS ILL IN SOME WAY?
HAH
HAH
HAH

I'M SORRY, ARE YOU OKAY ?
COUGH COUGH
HAVE SOME WATER, NONO-KO.
HERE ....
BROTHER, MY BODY IS BURNING ....
ゼヒ
ゼヒ
コロコロ
GULP
KOUME-SAN
GIVE IT HERE
コクン コクン

IF YOU GO NEAR HER MOUTH LIKE THAT, YOU MIGHT CATCH THE COLD.
.....
WHEN SOMEONE HAS A COLD, IT'S BEST TO WARM UP THE WATER IN YOUR MOUTH LIKE THAT AND MAKE THEM DRINK IT.
YOUR THROAT'S SWOLLEN, IT MUST HURT A LOT.
BUT, YOU KNOW, THERE MAY COME A TIME WHEN NONOKO-CHAN ONLY HAS YOU TO RELY ON, NIJIHIKO. YOU HAVE TO SUPPORT HER.
BUT SOMEONE HAS TO DO IT, OR SHE'LL SUFFER MORE, RIGHT?
I DON'T MIND. I'M IN CHARGE OF LOOKING AFTER THE SICK IN THIS TROUPE

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! JUST WHEN I THINK NONOKO HAS RECOVERED, NIJIHIKO GETS LAID UP.
THE SNAKES WILL BE HIBER-NATING SOON SO WE HAVE TO PRAC-TISE THIS NOW.
HI-YAH !!
EVEN SO, NONOKO'S DONE WELL TO PROGRESS SO QUICKLY. READING, WRITING, ARITHMETIC, SHE'S GOT MORE BRAINS THAN ME.
THE LEFT AND RIGHT LIVE AND DIE TOGETHER; IF ONE DIES THE OTHER IS ALREADY BEYOND HELP. THAT'S THE FATE OF SIAMESE TWINS.
OUR STARS HAVE MADE A HOBBY OF GETTING SICK.
LOOK, THEY'RE BEING SO BRAVE
BUT IN THESE HARD TIMES, THEY HOLD THE FATE OF OUR TENT IN THEIR HANDS
IF ONLY ...
IF THEY WEREN'T DE-FORMED, THE SIBLINGS WOULD HAVE HAPPILY GONE TO SCHOOL AND LED RES-PECTABLE LIVES.

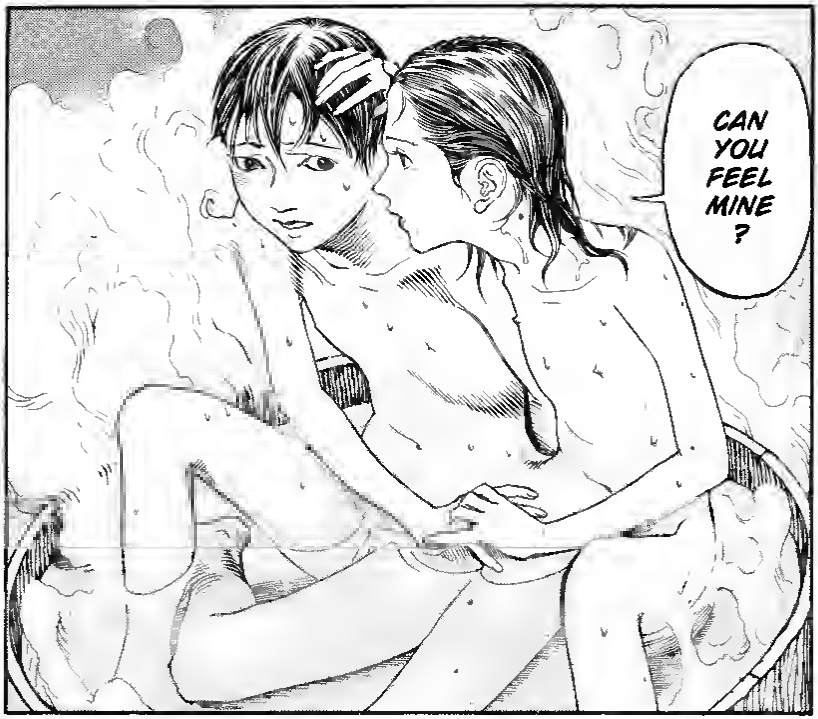
YOU'RE BURNING UP.
I KNOW!
BROTHER, THIS TIME IT'S MY TURN TO NURSE YOU. DON'T WORRY.
ゼェ
ゼェ
I'LL TRY IT TOO.
コチョ
コチョ
?
YOU HAVE TO HURRY UP AND GET BETTER SO WE CAN GO BACK ON THE STAGE.
WHA- WHAT ?
IF WE TAKE 10 DAYS OFF, EVERYONE WILL PROBABLY BE A LITTLE MAD AT US.
プチュ
DO YOU WANT MORE WATER ?
WHY IS NONOKO SO CLOSE ?

WHEN NONOKO HAD A COLD, I DIDN'T WANT TO CATCH IT -SO I WORE A MASK AT ALL TIMES...
WHY IS NONOKO FINE WITH IT?
I DON'T WANT WATER!
IT WASN'T KOUME-SAN, I DID IT MYSELF.
IS NONO-KO...
KINDER THAN ME?

EVEN HAKUDAMI'S TOUTING ISN'T ENOUGH TO GET CUSTOMERS IN IN THIS WEATHER
THE TROUPE LEADER IS A FOOL. WE SHOULD MOVE SOUTH IMMEDIATELY.
DAMN IT, NO ONE'S COMING.
HEY, WE'RE DONE FOR THE DAY
ANYONE WHO WANTS TO GO TO THE BATH-HOUSE, GET OVER HERE!
ON DAYS LIKE THIS ALL YOU CAN DO IS HAVE A BATH, THEN SQUEEZE ONE OUT AND SLEEP.
WE SHOULD JUST SET UP THE TENT IN AN ONSEN AREA.

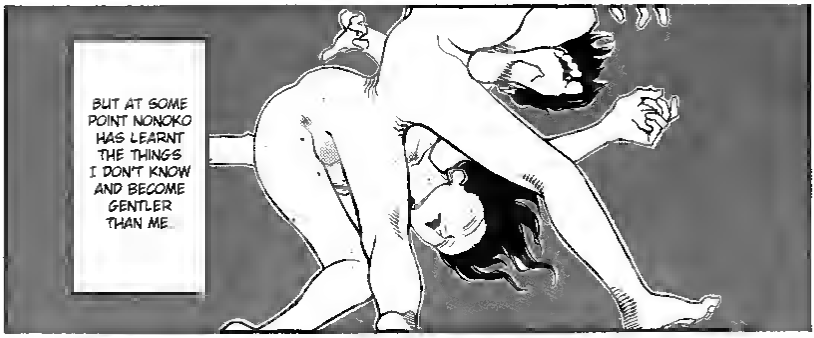
WE'RE FIRST TODAY, IT'S SO LOVELY AND WARM.
THE HOT WATER IS READY HERE TOO.
ゴシ ゴシ
MUST BE NICE TO BE ABLE TO GO TO THE BATHHOUSE, WE HAVE TO WAIT TO GO IN THE BATH HERE.
IF YOU WENT TO THE BATH-HOUSE YOU'D FRIGHTEN ALL THE NORMAL CUSTOMERS AND BUSINESS WOULD DROP.
NONOKO PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT OUR SISTER.
YOU KNOW, WHEN WE WERE AT HOME OUR BIG SISTER WOULD ALWAYS COME IN THE BATH WITH US.
……

YEAH!
PHEW! THEN NIJIHIKO-KUN IS NEXT.
OKAY, NONO-KO-CHAN, YOU'RE DONE
KOUME-SAN CAN WASH ME TOO!
OH, IS THAT SO ?
THAT'S OKAY, KOUME-SAN I'M GOING TO WASH MY BROTHER STARTING TODAY.
WHAT!? NO WAY!
BUT ...
PLEASE HURRY UP.
LIBOO! LIBOO!
YOU TWO ARE ABLE TO WASH EACH OTHER AFTER ALL.
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. IF YOU DO THAT THEN I CAN HELP WASH TWO OTHERS.
I CAN FEEL IT THROUGH HERE.
WHEN WE'RE WITH KOUME-SAN, YOUR HEART BEATS FASTER.
AND I KNOW YOU LIKE KOUME-SAN.
WHAT !!
WHAT? HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?
BROTHER, IT FEELS GOOD HERE, DOESN'T IT?
I JUST DO.


CAN YOU FEEL MINE ?

I CA-N'T
I DON'T UN-DER-STAND NONO-KO.
I'VE NEVER TRIED TO.
NOW IF I CON-CENTRATE ON THE NERVES THAT CONNECT OUR HIPS...
I FEEL LIKE I CAN SOME-HOW UNDER-STAND HER FEELINGS.
HER HEART-BEAT IS WEA-KER THAN MINE.
I CAN FEEL IT SENDING BLOOD AROUND LIKE A SMALL PUMP.

I THOUGHT I KNEW EVERYTHING, I THOUGHT I WAS WINNING.
UNTIL NOW MY LITTLE SISTER HAS JUST CLUNG TO ME LIKE A BABY.


BUT AT SOME POINT NONOKO HAS LEARNT THE THINGS I DON'T KNOW AND BECOME GENTLER THAN ME...

NONOKO...
DO I HAVE TO START WORRYING ABOUT YOU AND COMPARING US LIKE THIS NOW?

チョキン
チョキン
……
I MADE A KIMONO FOR US TO WEAR. I'M SEWING THEM TOGETHER AT THE HIP AREA.
WOW, I ONLY TAUGHT YOU THE ONCE BUT YOU'RE ALREADY THIS SKILLED?
ハイッ
ハイッ
AAH!
SHE'S EVEN MORE CAREFUL WITH THE NECK-BAND THAN ME.
I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SO CRAFTY, NONO-KO. MAYBE I'LL MAKE YOU MY SEAM-STRESS.
HMM
ボオッ
LEARN FROM NONOKO AND FIND SOME WAY TO BE USEFUL TO YOUR COMRADES.
OW!
GIVE IT BACK!
YOU'RE ALWAYS READING BOOKS, BUT YOU WON'T LEARN ANYTHING FROM THIS TRASH.
ポイッ

タタタン
タン
HOW ABOUT THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!! A MIRACLE, TWO HEARTS BEATING AS ONE! IT'S A TAP DANCE BY OUR SIAMESE TWINS!!
BREATHING IN SYNC AND THE DANCE IS FIRST-CLASS! THIS IS A PERFORMANCE YOU'LL SEE NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD!
タン
タカタカ
タン
ガクッ
タッ
AH!

OH, NO!
AAH!
あっはっはっ
FALLING IN SYNC IS MORE LIKE IT' EVEN MY DAUGHTER COULD DO THAT!
NIJI-HIKO !!
IDI-OTS! GET UP!
TODAY THE STAGE IS WET AND IT'S EASY TO FALL. IT'S ENTER-TAINING IF THEY OCCASI-ONALLY FALL... HEHEHE!
WHAT WAS THAT TODAY!? ARE YOU STILL NOT PUTTING YOUR BACK INTO LEARNING THE ACTS !?
IT HURTS ...
ARE YOU OKAY, BROTHER ?

IF THEY FEEL RIPPED OFF IN THE STICKS, THEY WON'T COME BACK AGAIN.
YOUR SISTER CAN DO IT! WHY DO YOU, THE OLDER BROTHER, KEEP FAILING?
MY FOOT GOT CAUGHT ON NONO-KO'S DRESS
I'M SURE I'VE TOLD YOU THIS BEFORE: THERE AREN'T MANY PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THEY GET BORED EASILY. AND UNLIKE THE CITY, THEY'RE NOT RICH ENOUGH HERE TO BE ABLE TO USE AMA-CHAN'S SKILL EVERY TIME.
THEN WHY DON'T WE JUST GO TO TOKYO?
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?
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ピク
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ヒソヒソ
ピク
H

LISTEN UP! NONOKO ISN'T THE ONLY ONE YOU'RE STUCK WITH. EVERYONE IN THE FREAK SHOW IS STUCK WITH EACH OTHER. YOU MIGHT WANT TO GO SOMEWHERE, BUT CRIPPLES CAN'T DO IT ALONE.
YOU BRAT! CAUSING TROUBLE WITH YOUR WORDS IS ALL YOU'RE GOOD AT!
NO FOOD FOR YOU TODAY!
NONOKO, DON'T YOU DARE GIVE HIM ANY!
BRO-THER ...

YOU'RE HUNGRY, AREN'T YOU?
NOT REA-LLY.
HEY
WHAT?
ワルルル
A RICE BALL.
ゴク
キュロロロ
I HID IT IN MY HAND.
COME ON, TAKE IT! EAT IT BEFORE SOMEBODY FINDS OUT.
O-OKAY.

KOU-ME-SAN
ARE YOU AWAKE?
WHAT?
カァ、カァ
ZZZ
KOUME-SAN, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO TOKYO?
WHAT'S IT LIKE ...?
HE WAS VENTING HIS ANGER AT GETTING JEERED AT BY THE CROWD.
WHY WAS HAKUDAMI SO MAD TODAY?
MY BROTHER DIDN'T DO ANY-THING WRONG.

ゴオオオ
THERE'S THIS TERRIBLE NOISE LIKE THE GROUND RUMBLING AND THE SCREAMS OF SO MANY PEOPLE IN MY HEAD...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN TO A PLACE CALLED TOKYO...
MY BROTHER SAYS I DREAMT IT...
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHEN OR WHERE I WAS BORN OR MY FATHER AND MOTHER...
カン
カンカン
GO TO SLEEP, HAKU-DAM! WILL HEAR YOU.

TAKE THAT!

AHAHA! BULLS-EYE!

NONOKO, MAKE MORE SNOWBALLS!
YES, SIR!

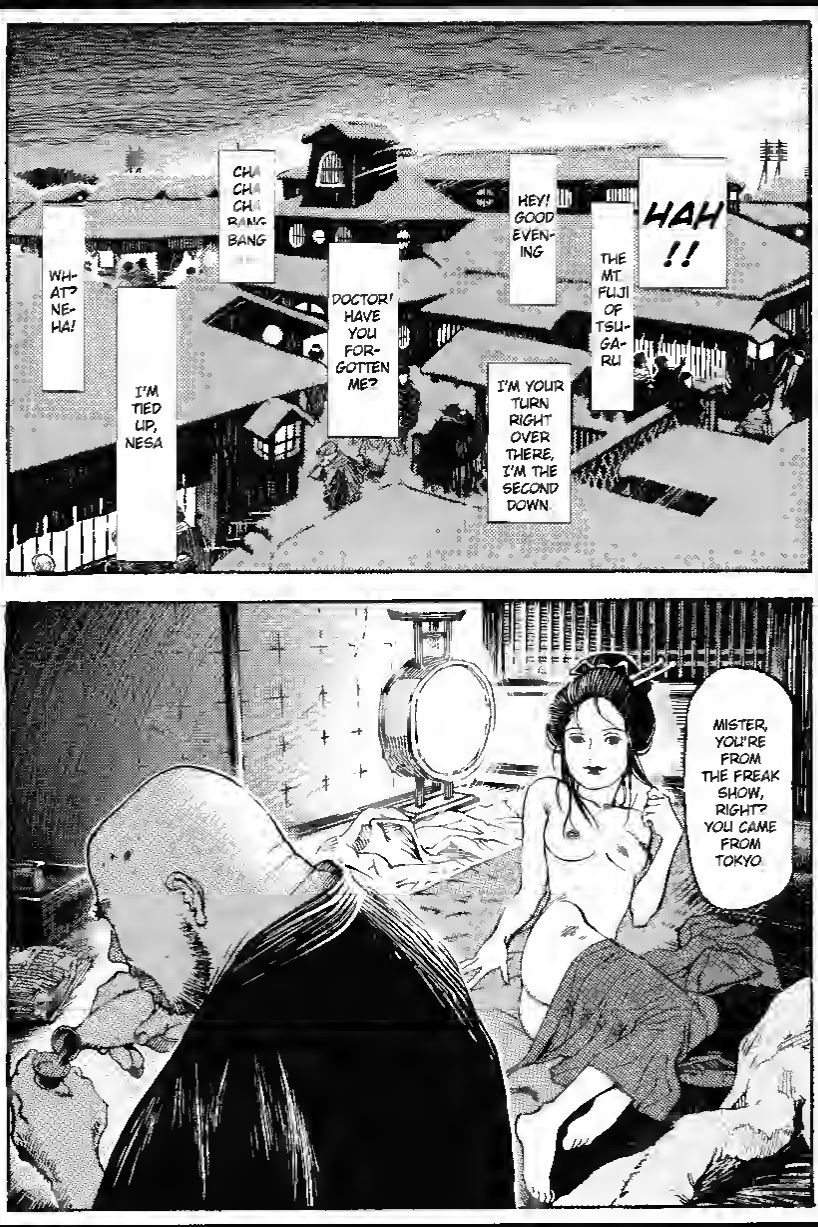
AH!

LOOK! I EVEN GOT THE MOLES.
NONOKO LOOKS A BIT BIGGER FOR SOME REASON.
LOOKS LIKE THAT PRETTY DANCING GIRL'S THRIVING AMONG ALL THOSE CRIPPLES
THEY CAME OUT FROM THE BACK OF THE TENT, THEY'RE FROM THE FREAK SHOW.
THAT LUCKY LITTLE BASTARD ON TOP OF HER !!
HEH!

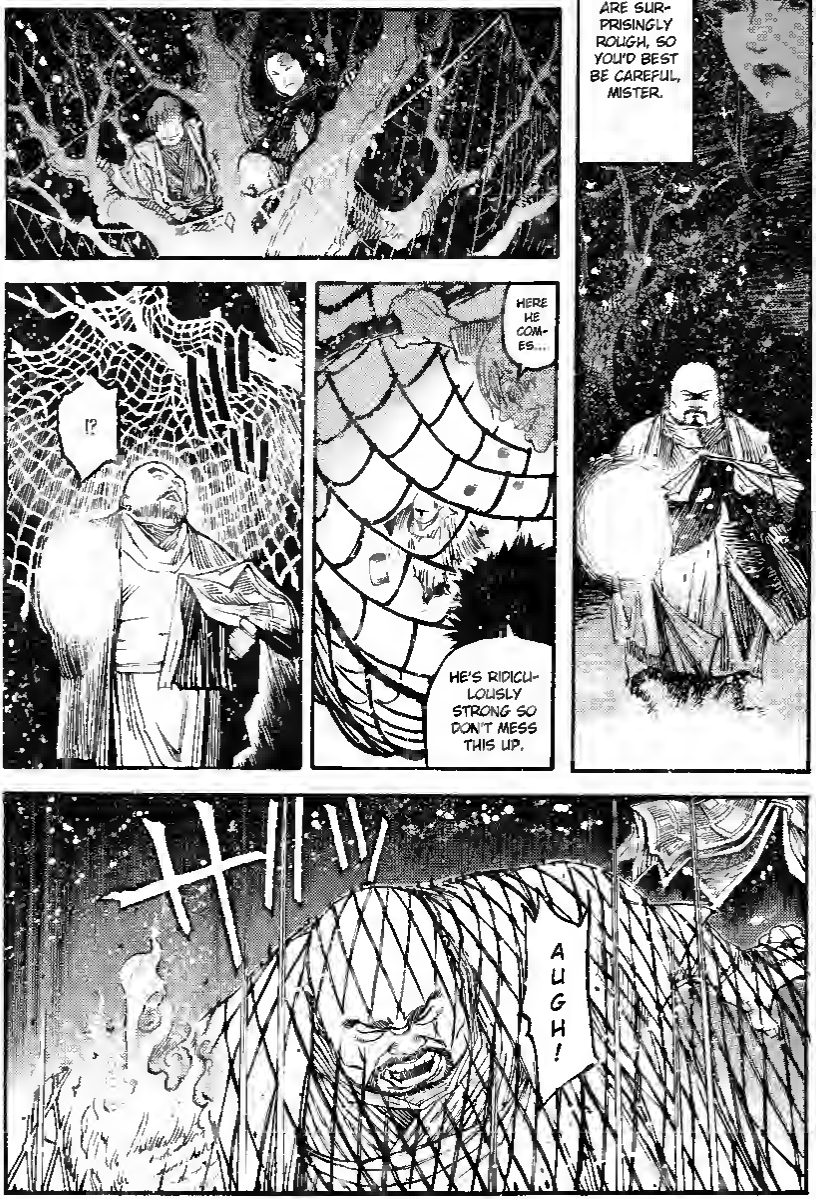
THOSE TOKYOITES ARE HERE IN TOHOKU BECAUSE IT'S GETTING CLOSE TO NEBUTA
EVEN THOUGH WE BARELY GET ANY CUSTOMERS THIS TIME OF YEAR.
THANKS TO THEM, THE SHOWMEN HERE ARE ALL LOSING BUSINESS.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST DEMAND THEY MOVE ON AND CHASE THEM OUT? YOU'VE GOT FRIENDS WHO'LL HELP, RIGHT?
NO, WE CAN'T ACT THREATENINGLY TOWARDS THE TENT.
COME ON! HOW CAN WE CALL OURSELVES YAKUZA IF WE CAN'T EVEN BE T SOME PERFORMERS! IT'S JUST SHAMEFUL!
LEA- VE IT TO ME.
IN ANY CASE, SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE ABOUT THAT TOKYO TROUPE.
WAIHA! YOU AND YOUR MEN WILL DO ANYTHING FOR MONEY, DON'T TALK AS IF YOU'RE ANYTHING MORE THAN BEGGARS!

YOU CAN PEEK IN HERE.
わあぁ
MWAH♡
おっお
SHE PUTS ON AIRS FOR A GIRL IN A HAUNTED HOUSE.
CHECK OUT THAT SLUG GIRL!

DO I NEED TO HURT YOU BEFORE YOU'LL LEARN?
YOU GUYS KEEP SNEAKING IN WITHOUT PAYING!
?
IF YOU COME BACK I'LL CRUSH YOUR BONES.
HE GOT US.
YOU BASTARD! WE'LL REMEMBER THIS!
TAKE THAT!
OW!


WH-AT? NE-HA!
I'M TIED UP, NESA
CHA CHA CHA BANG BANG
DOCTOR! HAVE YOU FOR-GOTTEN ME?
HEY! GOOD EVEN-ING
I'M YOUR TURN RIGHT OVER THERE, I'M THE SECOND DOWN.
THE MT FUJI OF TSU-GA-RU
HAH !!
MISTER, YOU'RE FROM THE FREAK SHOW, RIGHT? YOU CAME FROM TOKYO.

I DON'T THINK THEY'RE LIKE ME, THEY HAVE AN INSTINCT TO NOT ACCEPT THOSE THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEM.
COUNTRY PEOPLE ARE INSULAR, THEY'RE CRUEL TO PEOPLE FROM TOKYO.
IT'S OBVIOUS, BUT PEOPLE AREN'T ALL BORN INTO GOOD CIRCUM-STANCES.
I'M FROM TOKYO TOO I WAS DRIVEN OUT BY THE EARTH-QUAKE
I DRIFTED AROUND AND NOW I'M A PROSTITUTE GEISHA IN THIS BLEAK TOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE
HOW'D YOU GET THOSE BRUISES ?
THEY DON'T LIKE OUT-SIDERS HERE.
IT'S THE SAME EVERY-WHERE
WHEN IT COMES TO OUTSIDERS, THEY CAN ONLY BE ABOVE OR BELOW THE TOWNSFOLK IF SOMEONE'S ABOVE THEM, THEY BEG AND GROVEL. IF THEY'RE UNDER THEM, THEY THOROUGHLY CRUSH THEM UNDERFOOT.


THE LOT OF THEM HERE ARE SURPRISINGLY ROUGH, SO YOU'D BEST BE CAREFUL, MISTER.
HERE WE COMES...
HE'S RIDICULOUSLY STRONG SO DON'T MESS THIS UP.
!?
AUGH!

WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT SHALL WE DO? HOT POT? MINCE? OR FRIED DAIKON PICKLES?
YOU CAN AT LEAST EAT BEAR, WE CAN'T EVEN GET A FUR OFF THIS ONE.
WH- WHAT'S THIS!?
YOU.. THE THREE IDIOTS !?
H- HE'S BIGGER THAN THAT BEAR CUB WE KILLED THE OTHER DAY!
I SEE ...
THE REASON HAKUDAMI DOESN'T WANT TO GO TO TOKYO..
IS BECAUSE IF WE WENT BACK THERE, NIJIHIKO AND NONOKO'S RELATIVES WOULD COME FORWARD

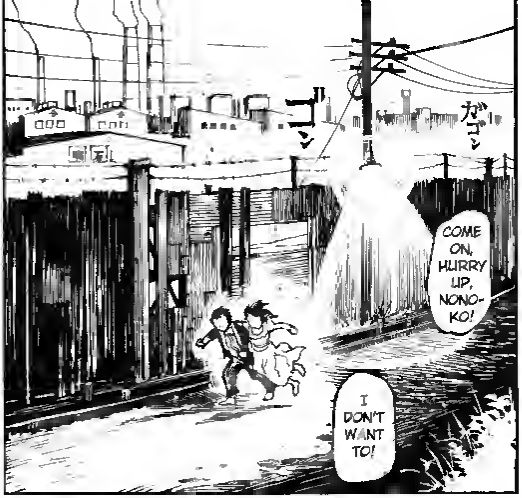
OUR LARGE FAMILY DOES NEED THOSE TWIN'S EARNINGS TO SURVIVE, THOUGH.
I HEARED FROM A CUSTOMER YESTERDAY THAT THE STREET TOUGHS HAVE THEIR SIGHTS SET ON US.
ビクッ!!
IF THE YAKUZA GET INVOLVED, THEY'LL TAKE ALL WE HAVE AND KICK US OUT.
I KNOW I LOOK LIKE THIS, BUT I'VE BEEN SLOWLY SAVING UP.
THIS ISN'T A JOKE!!
I HAVE A DREAM OF SAVING ENOUGH MONEY TO BUILD MY OWN HOUSE, GETTING A WIFE AND LIVING LIKE ANY OTHER PERSON. I KNOW ONE DAY I'LL BE HAPPY AND THAT'S WHY I KEEP STRIVING HARD...
ヤクザ
IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
I DON'T WANT THE YAKUZA TO TAKE THAT FROM ME!

WH-WHAT HAP-PENED, STONE BEAR!?
HE'S BURNT! WHO WOULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS!?
I BET IT WAS THOSE YAKU-ZA!
WE SHOULD HAVE MOVED ON SOONER.
ドン
EEEK!

BROTHER, LET'S GO TO TOKYO.

WE'RE JUST CAUSING EVERYONE TROUBLE BEING HERE. LET'S LEAVE
I STARTED RUNNING AWAY A LONG TIME AGO.

YOU PROBABLY DON'T REMEMBER BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I'VE TRIED TO GET OUT OF THE TROUPE.
BRING OUT THE CONJOINED TWINS!
GET OFF, IDIOTS!
WE DIDN'T PAY TO SEE SHITTY TRICKS!
YOU SAY THEY'RE REALLY CONJOINED BOY AND GIRL BUT YOU BROUGHT THEM HERE BY TRAIN SO WE COULDN'T SEE!
BRING 'EM OUT ALREADY !!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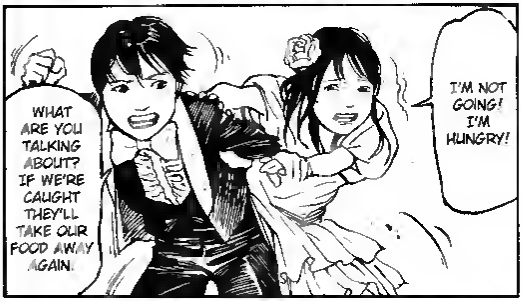
ガゴン
COME ON, HURRY UP, NONO-KO!
I DON'T WANT TO!


I'M NOT GOING! I'M HUNGRY!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? IF WE'RE CAUGHT THEY'LL TAKE OUR FOOD AWAY AGAIN.

NO, NO! I DON'T WANT TO GO! LET'S GO BACK!
YOU GO BY YOUR-SELF!

I- I CAN'T DO THAT!
WHY WOULD YOU EVEN SAY THAT!

ARE THEY TRYING TO OPEN A HOLE IN OUR PER-FORMANCE?
DOES ANY-ONE KNOW WHERE NIJI-HIKO AND NONOKO WENT?
WHO KNOWS, THEY COULD HAVE RUN OFF FOR ALL I KNOW, I DON'T CARE!

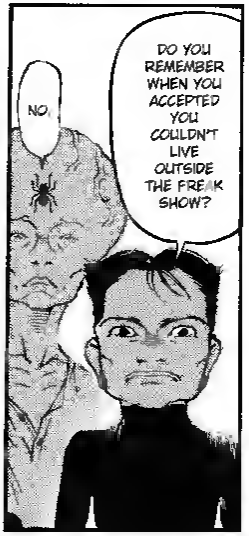
YOU SHOULD CARE, IDIOT! FIND THEM AND BRING THEM BACK!
O- OKAY!

I DON'T REMEMBER AT ALL.
IN THE END WE ALWAYS GET TAKEN BACK AND PUNISHED.

STUPID NO-NO-KO!
STUPID BROTHER!
YOU ARE THE IDIOT!
HEY, OVER THERE!!
I SEE THEM.

WHAT?
LET'S GO, BROTHER.

READY, GO!


NO.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU ACCEPTED YOU COULDN'T LIVE OUTSIDE THE FREAK SHOW?

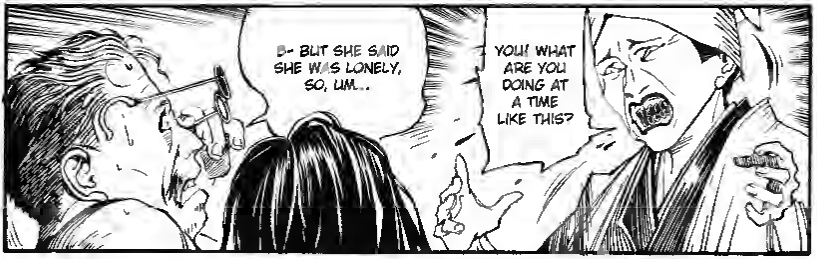
WHAT ARE YOU DOING NONO-KO!?
SLOW DOWN, IT HURTS!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING!? JUST STOP!
AH
NNH

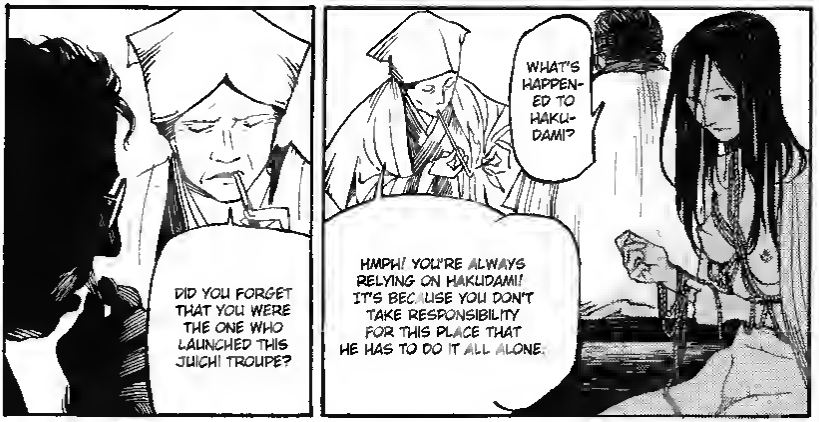
HAH
HAH
HAH

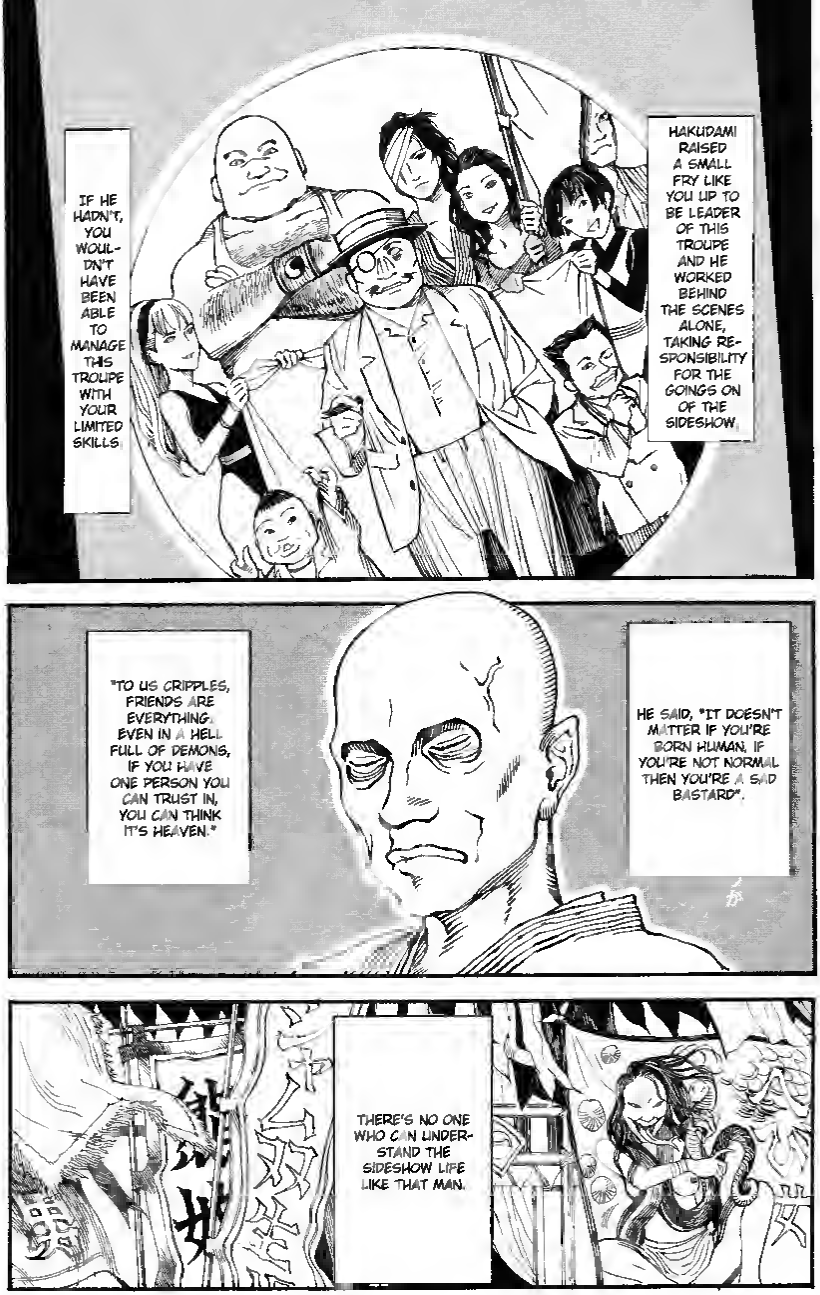
WHAT ?
I FEEL LIKE HAKUDAMI MIGHT HAVE BEEN RIGHT.
.....
LET'S RUN AWAY, BROTHER. I CAN RUN FAST NOW.
I'M SURE WE CAN GET FAR IF WE'RE TOGETHER.

WHAT IF WE GO BACK TO TOKYO AND OUR FAMILY ARE ALL DEAD?
WE DON'T HAVE ANYONE WE COULD GO TO FOR HELP.
HOW WILL WE GET A PLACE TO LIVE AND FOOD TO EAT?
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR CHILDREN
AND WE'RE NOT NORMAL PEOPLE.
IF WE WANT TO GO ON LIVING, WE SHOULD STAY IN THE FREAK SHOW WITH OUR ABNORMAL FRIENDS...

STONE BEAR...
HE HASN'T DRUNK ANYTHING SINCE LAST NIGHT.
HOW IS HE?
WE NEED TO TAKE HIM TO A DOCTOR IN A BIG CITY.
TROUPE LEADER!
HON-EST-LY!


B- BUT SHE SAID SHE WAS LONELY, SO, UM...
YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT A TIME LIKE THIS?


DID YOU FORGET THAT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO LAUNCHED THIS JUICH! TROUPE?
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HAKUDAMI?
HMPH! YOU'RE ALWAYS RELYING ON HAKUDAMI! IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS PLACE THAT HE HAS TO DO IT ALL ALONE.

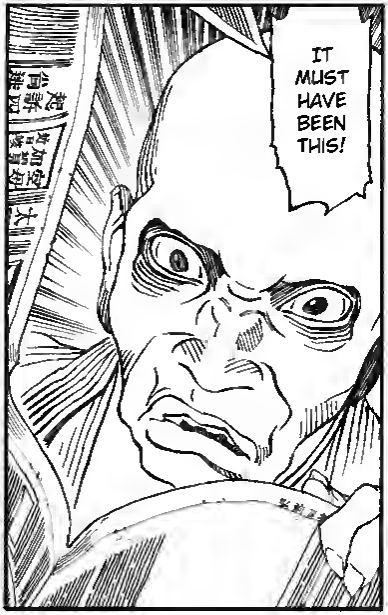

IF HE HADN'T, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MANAGE THIS TROUPE WITH YOUR LIMITED SKILLS.
HAKUDAMI RAISED A SMALL FRY LIKE YOU UP TO BE LEADER OF THIS TROUPE AND HE WORKED BEHIND THE SCENES ALONE, TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOINGS ON OF THE SIDESHOW.
"TO US CRIPPLES, FRIENDS ARE EVERYTHING. EVEN IN A HELL FULL OF DEMONS, IF YOU HAVE ONE PERSON YOU CAN TRUST IN, YOU CAN THINK IT'S HEAVEN."
HE SAID, "IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE BORN HUMAN, IF YOU'RE NOT NORMAL THEN YOU'RE A SAD BASTARD".
THERE'S NO ONE WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE SIDESHOW LIFE LIKE THAT MAN.

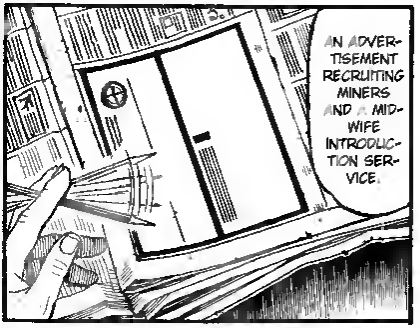
東北新聞社
SIGN: TOHOKU NEWSPAPER COMPANY
THIS ISN'T THE YAKUZA'S DOING.
SO, WHY DID YOU COME TO THE NEWSROOM TODAY?
THE MIS-ERS!
A WALLET. A PIPE. A GOLD POCKET WATCH . THE PEOPLE WHO GOT STONE BEAR WERE AFTER VALUABLE ITEMS, THEY SWIPED EVERY-THING.
?
AREN'T YOU CURIOUS ABOUT THAT PART? DID STONE BEAR CUT IT OUT, OR WAS IT THE THIEVES...?
THIS WAS DROPPED ON THE ROAD WHERE STONE BEAR WAS BURNT.

パラ
カサッ

SORRY FOR THE WAIT, I HAVE IT HERE. IT'S THE MORNING EDITION OF THE HIROSAKI DAILY REPORT FROM THE 19TH OF MARCH

AND WHAT WAS PRINTED ON THE RIPPED OUT PIECE WAS...


IT MUST HAVE BEEN THIS!


AN ADVERTISEMENT RECRUITING MINERS AND A MIDWIFE INTRODUCTION SERVICE.

WHAT ARE YOU INVESTIGATING?
IT CAN'T HAVE BEEN THAT!

NIJIHIKO, NONOKO
TWIN SIBLINGS, 12 YEARS OLD
WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN DUE TO THE GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE
YOUR SISTER'S WAITING,
MINAMO

WHAT ARE YOU SNIGGERING ABOUT?
THEY'RE COMING OUT WITH SCOWLS ON THEIR FACES
NOTHING, YOU STINK!

HE HE
ニヤ〃
炭坑夫募集

WHICH MEANS THERE'S NO M- M- MEN AT THE FREAK SHOW N- NOW, RIGHT?
THERE'S THE BLOCK-HEAD TROUPE LEADER AND THE HERMA-PHRODITE SO ONE AND A HALF MEN
HEHEHE... STONE BEAR SHOULD BE THERE TOO.
COME ON, LET'S HEAD TO THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT.
I'M IN THE MOOD TO STAY AT THE BROTHEL TONIGHT
WELL FELLAS, SHALL WE GO PLAY WITH SOME GIRLS TOO?

チャン
チャン
チャン
INSIDE
...
IS A
GREEN
...

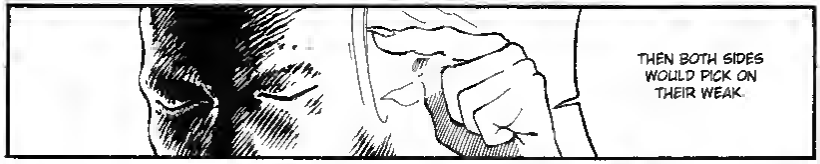
THAT NIGHT HE KEPT STARING AT SOMETHING IN THE NEWS-PAPER HE DIDN'T SAY A LOT.
SO THE CONVER SATION WAS VERY ONE-SIDED

I TOLD HIM WE HAVE TO BE CARE-FUL BECAUSE WE'RE OUT-SIDERS...
OUT-SIDERS ?
I DON'T KNOW THAT I AM, I WAS BORN INTO THIS WORLD.
WHAT ?
I'M A BLIND MAN WHO ESCAPED FROM THAT HELL TO THIS PLACE.

I WAS BORN IN A VILLAGE DEEP WITHIN THE MOUNTAINS. THOUGH I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE IT IS NOW.
LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW, IT BECOMES LIKE A SANATORIUM FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL.
BUT IT IS WITHOUT A DOUBT HELL ON EARTH.
TERMINAL ILLNESS...
YOU MEAN DIVINE PUNISHMENT!?
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT THE PERSON WHO WAS MY MOTHER WAS STRUCK DOWN BY GOD'S WRATH. SHE WAS FREED BY RELATIVES AND UNDERWENT MEDICAL TREATMENT.

USUALLY, BABIES BORN FROM THOSE SUFFERING FROM DIVINE PUNISHMENT WOULD BE RETURNED TO DARKNESS TO PREVENT INFECTION, BUT MY MOTHER BEGGED FOR MY LIFE AND SO I WASN'T CULLED
WELL, IT SEEMS THE DOCTOR ONLY LET ME LIVE SO HE COULD RESEARCH ME, BUT EITHER WAY, I AM DEFINITELY A CHILD OF GOD'S WRATH
HEH, WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?
YOU'VE KNOWN CRUELTY BECAUSE YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ME LIKE THAT?
EVERYWHERE IS THE SAME
ガラ

DON'T COME NEAR US! WE DON'T WANT YOUR DISEASE!!
THOSE WHO SUFFERED FROM THE DIVINE PUNISHMENT WOULD SAY "YOU CAN'T DISCRIMINATE", BUT THEN THEY'D GO AND MAKE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE WRATH OF GOD AND TUBERCULOSIS. THEY'D SAY THEY DIDN'T WANT TO EAT FOOD FROM THE SAME FIELD AS THE TUBERCULOSIS SUFFERERS

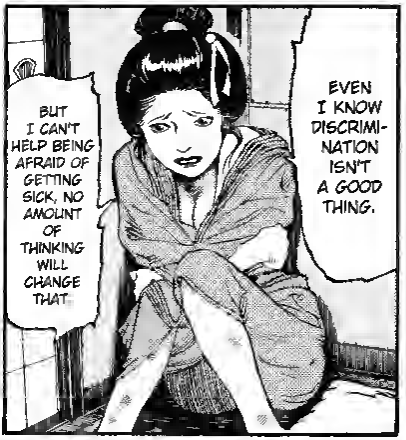

THEN BOTH SIDES WOULD PICK ON THEIR WEAK.

DISCRIMINATION BY THE STRONG AGAINST THE WEAK WAS EXPELLED LIKE SPEW FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.

THOSE WEAK PEOPLE SOUGHT OUT EVEN WEAKER INDIVI-DUALS

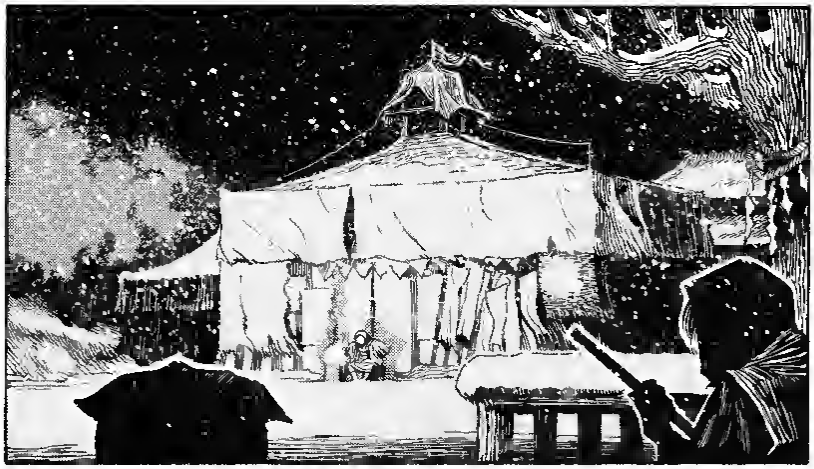
MY MOTHER WASTED AWAY WITH HER ILLNESS BUT I WASN'T SCARED AT ALL.
I LOVED MY MOTHER AND SHE DOTED ON ME.

COUGH COUGH


EVEN I KNOW DISCRIMI-NATION ISN'T A GOOD THING.
BUT I CAN'T HELP BEING AFRAID OF GETTING SICK, NO AMOUNT OF THINKING WILL CHANGE THAT.

I CAN'T ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION BUT I CAN END UP FORGETTING.
IT'S THE WAY HUMANS ARE.

IF ONLY PEOPLE FELT THE SAME... WE COULD ALL FIT TOGETHER AMICABLY ...



HEHE, THEY'RE NERVOUS AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO STONE BEAR.
パチパチ
HMPH, THE HERMA-PHRODITE'S KEEPING GUARD OUT FRONT.

NO ONE'S GOING TO CARE IF THEY JUST DIS-APPEAR.
DON'T THINK OF THEM AS HUMAN. WE'RE JUST GIVING MONSTERS WHAT THEY DESERVE.

I'LL GO AROUND TO THE BACK AND WHILE I'M DOING THAT, YOU DEAL WITH THIS ONE THEN WE'LL RAID THE INSIDE ALL AT ONCE.
W-WE'RE GOING TO KILL THEM!?

!?
OKAY, OKAY.
DON'T LAY A HAND ON THOSE SIAMESE TWINS. THEY'RE MY PREY!

SUR-
PRISE
ATTACK
!!
IT'S A
SNEAKING
VISIT!
WH-
WHAT
ARE
YOU
DOING
!?
EEEK!
LOOK
FOR
THE
SLUG
GIRL!
LEAVE
THE
LITTLE
ONES
FOR
LATER.

TH- THIS WON'T COME OUT!
GET OUT OF THE WAY! DO YOU WANT TO BE KILLED !?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
IT'S HORRIBLE! THE YAKUZA ARE ATTACKING!
YOU FURRY BASTARD! RUN AWAY!
UGH!

AH.. AH..
YOU TWO, HIDE! AND DON'T COME OUT!
BASTARDS! YOU MAY HAVE WANTED US GONE BUT YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR!
IF YOU DON'T COME OUT NOW, I'LL KILL THIS GOOK!
ARE YOU HERE, SLUG GIRL?
AARGH! DON'T!
IT SEEMS LIKE THEY'RE LOOKING FOR YOU, KOUME-SAN.
LET'S RUN AWAY OR THEY'LL KILL US TOO.
.....

HE THAT FIGHTS AND RUNS AWAY MAY LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY...
ガチャ ガチャ
MONEY
MONEY
MONEY
MONEY
YOU'D BETTER BE JOKING! I'M NOT DYING IN SOME BACK-WATER TOWN WITH AIKO!
WHAT ?
YOU BAS-TARD! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!!
HYUK HYUK HYUK! GOD DOESN'T EXIST! IF HE DID, WHY WOULD HE CREATE CRIPPLES, FREAKS AND MONSTERS LIKE YOU!?
YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD CRUSH US LIKE BUGS UNDERFOOT! EVEN IF YOU GET AWAY WITH IT IN THIS LIFE, GOD IN HEAVEN WON'T PARDON YOU!

WHAT DO WE DO? IF WE JUST STAY HERE EVERYONE WILL BE KILLED!
I- I KNOW, BUT..
BRO-THER ...!
NIJIHIKO, NONOKO, RUN AWAY FROM HERE.
WHAT ?
WHAT !?
GET OUT OF HERE AND GO TO TOKYO.

YOU HAVE TO LIVE TOGETHER, THE TWO OF YOU!
!!
YOU CAN SURVIVE TOGETHER.
COME WITH US TOO, KOUME!
IT MAY BE HARDER THAN LIVING HERE, BUT YOU TWO WILL ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS YOU RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE. THAT'S REAL HAPPINESS.
WHATEVER HAPPENS, DON'T LET YOUR HEARTS BE SEPARATED.

!?
HEHE... FOUND YOU!
AARGH!
LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO!
ジャキ
IF YOU'RE CRIPPLED, I'LL CUT OFF YOUR HEAD TOO.
KOUME-SAN!

TO HELL WITH TOURING!
IF YOU'VE GOT MONEY AND WOMEN, THINGS WILL SOMEHOW WORK OUT
Twins
EH!?
THE TROUPE LEADER IS FLEEING WITH A GIRL.
WHERE ARE THE TWINS?
AH!
TWINS? OH, THEY'RE IN THE ATTIC.
HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS GIRL, MISTER? I'LL GIVE HER TO ...
URK!

THAT WAS THE SOUND OF A GUN! LET'S GO BACK!
.....
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO FOR THEM.
BUT KOUME-SAN IS ...
AH!
RIGHT NOW I'M JUST TRYING TO GET YOU AWAY FROM THERE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO!
BROTHER ...
PLEASE UNDER-STAND THAT.

ヒュオオッ
ゴウッ
トラメ

ユサ
ユサ
ユサ
ユサ
EVEN THE TITS OF THESE TOKYO BITCHES ARE ELEGANT!
AAH!

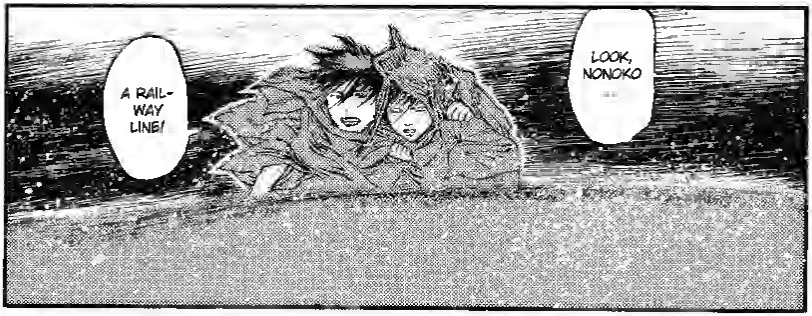
EVEN IF I DON'T GET THE SLUG GIRL, YOU'LL DO JUST FINE.
I'LL JUST MAKE YOU LOOK ME IN THE FACE.
HUH? SOME-THING STINKS ?
GAGH!

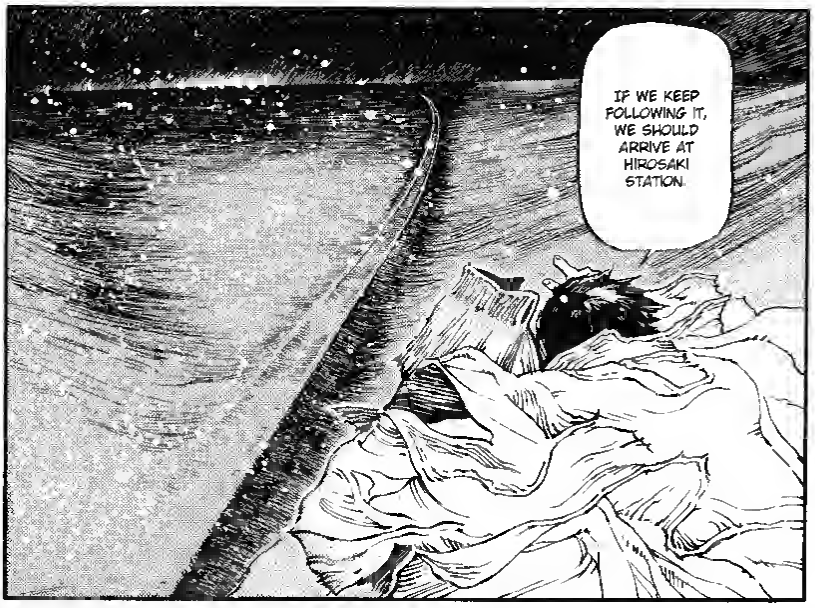
OH!
YOU MADE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING SHE WAS A POWERLESS LITTLE GIRL.
TAKE THAT!!
SHE ESCAPED!
OW!
YOU ANIMAL!

ゴゥ
ドドド

WHAT ?
?
NO, IT CAN'T BE!
PUT IT OUT!
THE FIRE'S SPREADING TO THE SHRINE
OH, NO!

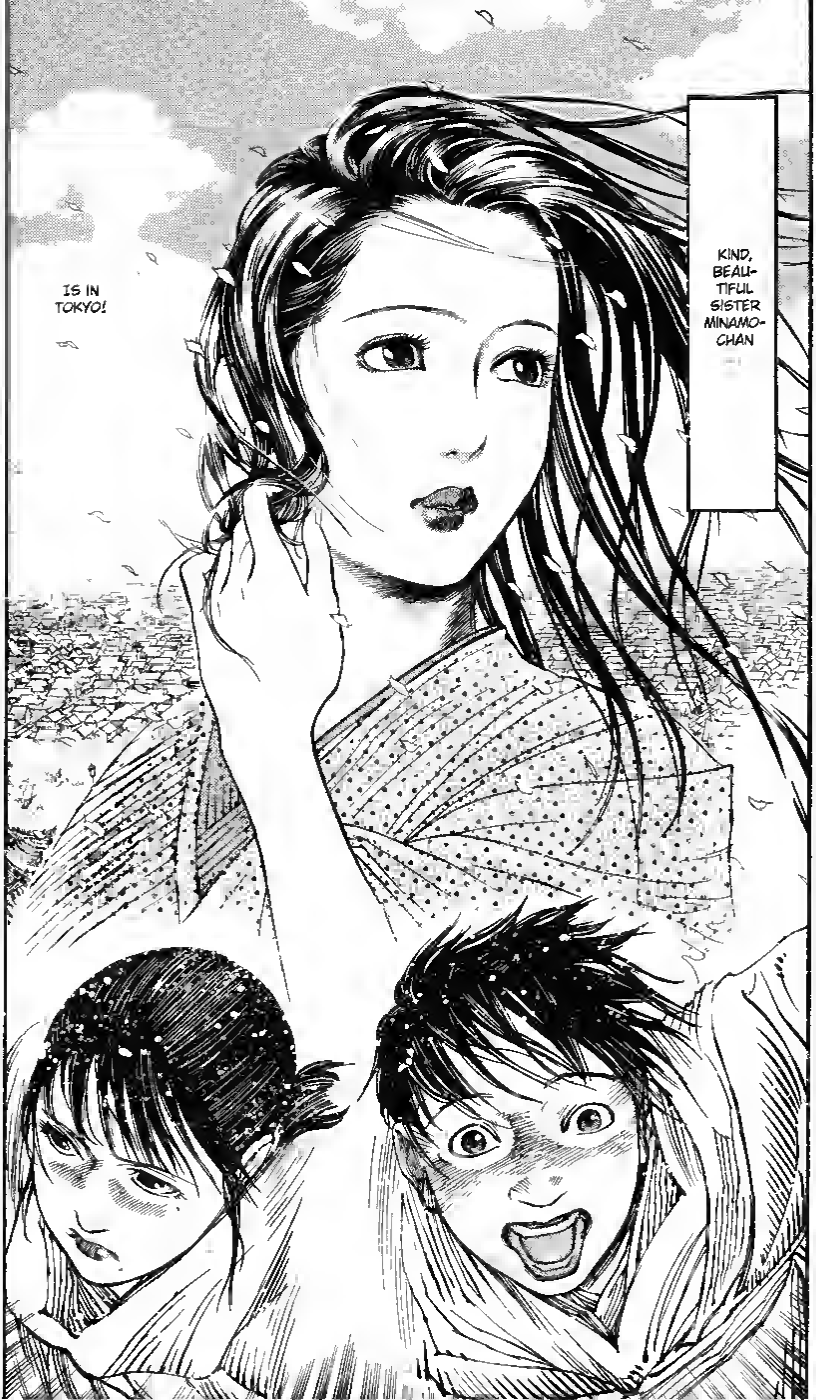
AH!
BROTHER, MY HOOD FLEW OFF ...
IDIOT, LEAVE IT.
IF WE DON'T HURRY, THEY'LL COME AFTER US.
SORRY.
HAH
PUT THIS ON.
EH?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I'LL BE FINE.
IF YOU'RE COLD, I START FEELING IT TOO.
OKAY.


A RAIL-WAY LINE!
LOOK, NONOKO


IF WE KEEP FOLLOWING IT, WE SHOULD ARRIVE AT HIROSAKI STATION.

WE CAN CATCH A TRAIN TO TOKYO FROM THERE.
...
I FOUND OUT HOW TO BUY TRAIN TICKETS.
THAT'S AMAZING, BROTHER !!
I DIDN'T SPEND ALL MY TIME READING BOOKS FOR SHOW.
IT'S JUST ...
I DON'T KNOW IF THE MONEY KOLIME-SAN GAVE US WILL PAY FOR TWO TICKETS.
WE'LL BE FINE, WE'RE ONE PERSON AFTER ALL.
IF WE TALK TO THE PEOPLE AT THE STATION, WE'LL WORK SOMETHING OUT.
YOU AND I ARE TWO AND ONE, ONE AND TWO.
YOU'RE ALWAYS SO OPTI-MISTIC.
HE HE HE.

WHO ARE YOU ?
...
I'LL COME TOO.
!?
DON'T WORRY, I MEAN TO KEEP YOU SAFE
NIJIHIKO, NONOKO
YOUR SISTER MINAMO-CHAN IS LOOKING FOR YOU.
OUR SIS-TER !!
THEN THAT MEANS... SHE'S ALIVE?
SIS-TER ?


KIND, BEAUTIFUL SISTER MINAMO-CHAN
IS IN TOKYO!

ボオオオオ
SHE THOUGHT YOU'D BE LOST SOMEWHERE AND HER INQUIRY IN THIS DISTRICT'S NEWSPAPER WAS A SUCCESS
SEE, THAT TRAIN GOES BY HERE AND THEN LOOPS BACK AROUND TO TOKYO
YES
YOU SHOULD FEEL A DEBT OF GRATIT... FOR THAT AND LET ME TAKE YOU THERE.
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LET'S GO, UNCLE!
SPRING ALREADY !!
IF YOU GET ON THAT, THIS TIME TOMORROW YOU'D BE WITH YOUR SISTER MINAMO-CHAN AND EVERYTHING WOULD BE STARTING TO WARM UP IN TIME FOR SPRING.
BRAT !
HE'S NOT A NICE MAN, I'M SURE OF IT!
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?!
カリ
HAHAHA, I'M NO UNCLE YET.
WH-
IF WE'RE GOING TO GO, LET'S GO BY OURSELVES.
BROTHER, I DON'T WANT TO GO WITH THIS MAN.

PAH!
HAKU-DAMI...
AH!
NONOKO'S RIGHT, NIJIHIKO.
HE'S ONE OF THE VILLAINS WHO ATTACKED OUR TENT.
YOU WEREN'T THERE!
BURNT TO ASHES...
WHAT ABOUT KOUME-SAN!!
OUR FAMILY...
YOU... YOU BURNT MY TROUPE TO ASHES
TAKE THESE AND GET OUT OF HERE!
YEAH! I'M NOT GOING BACK TO BEING FREAKS! WE'RE GOING TO LIVE WITH OUR SISTER AND BE HAPPY!
EVERY-ONE BE-SIDES YOU TWO IS DEAD.
HAH! I WONDER HOW THAT HAPPENED? DO YOU WANT TO STAY WITH THE FREAKS, NIJIHIKO? YOU WANT TO GO TO TOKYO, DON'T YOU?

THESE ARE ALL OF YOUR WAGES.
YOU CHEEKY BRATS ARE FIRED, GO TO TOKYO AND SUCK ON YOUR SISTER'S TIT.
ギャラ
HEY THERE ...
YOU'LL PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID TO THE JUICHI TROUPE.
YOU LEFT THE GUN AND RAN AWAY. THAT WAS A MISTAKE.
BRO-THER, LOOK!
ゴゴゴ
HEY!!
HAKUDAMI MEANS TO DIE ALONG WITH THAT MAN!
HEY!
HEY!
HEY, THE TRAIN'S COMING!!
DON'T GRUMBLE!
FORGET ABOUT ME, GET OUT OF HERE!
C58363
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IT'S SNOWING
PATHETIC, I COULDN'T FORGIVE MYSELF IF I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO KEPT ON LIVING.
I THOUGHT LIVING TOGETHER WITH OTHER DEFORMED PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF WAS THE ULTIMATE HAPPINESS BUT THIS IS THE END RESULT.
HELP ME ...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING! YOU'LL DIE TOO!
RUN, HAKUDAMI!
SOMEDAY DISABLED PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION.

HAKUDAMI!
キキキキ

HIS PAIN IS MY PAIN. MY HAPPINESS IS EVERYONE'S HAPPINESS. I WISH WE COULD LIVE LIKE OTHER PEOPLE THAT IS MY DREAM...
DON'T LOSE !!
NIJI-HIKO! NONO-KO!
EVERY-ONE...
"THE LOVE THAT BINDS US TO HEA-VEN" PART 1
-END-

IT'S QUITE HARD. WHAT'S HARD? TO ME, IT'S BEING BOUND BY CONCRETE IDEAS.

IN ACTUAL FACT, I'M JUST ONE PERSON. ABSOLUTELY ISOLATED. THE WORLD EXISTS ON THE COMMON DENOMINATOR THAT "EVERYONE IS ISOLATED".

FOR 10 MONTHS A FOREIGN BODY GROWS WITHIN YOUR MOTHER'S FLESH, AND AT THE END OF IT YOU'RE PURGED FROM THE WOMB AND GIVEN LIFE. THAT'S WHEN YOUR SOLITARY HELL BEGINS.

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER? NO ONE'S NAIVE ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT. INFANTICIDE, PARRICIDE, CRUELTY IS PAR FOR THE COURSE. FOR THE VERY REASON WE HAVE OTHER PEOPLE CLOSE TO US, WE HATE EACH OTHER.

SAY I FALL IN LOVE. OR I HAVE A CLOSE FRIEND. WE VOW TO BE TOGETHER FOREVER, BUT WE END UP BEING SEPARATED SURPRISINGLY EASILY. OH, IT'S SO HEARTRENDING.

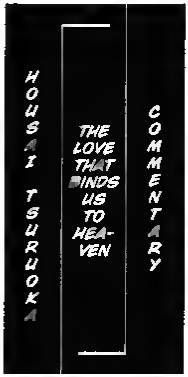
I SAY THEY'RE THE ONLY ONE FOR ME, BUT WE BREAK UP AGAIN. YOU'RE ALWAYS ISOLATED.

LIVING IS UNPLEASANT. EVERYTHING STARTS FROM HERE. EVEN THOUGH IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE THE MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR BIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY MAKE UP A TINY PERCENTAGE, WE'VE ENDED UP WITH THIS RIDICULOUS AND BURDENSOME THING. A ROCK CAN BE BROKEN OR SMASHED, BUT IT IS STILL NOTHING BUT A ROCK. BUT IF WE DIE WE'RE BODY AND SOUL. THE BODY AND SOUL ARE BEINGS WITH MEANING AND AWARENESS. IT'S TOO GHASTLY.

OH, WHY IS SKIN SKIN?
WHO DOES THIS BORDER LINE EXIST FOR? EVEN IF WE STRIVE FOR UNIFICATION, IT'S ALL IN VAIN.

THE WORDS "I LOVE YOU" HAVE BEEN SHOUTED A XILLION TIMES LIKE AN INCANTATION, EVEN IF YOU JOIN YOUR BODIES IN SEX, ALL THAT'S EXCHANGED IS MUCUS. YOU PARTNER STAYS THEMSELVES, AND DO NOT BECOME A PART OF YOU.

DREAM. IMAGINE THAT YOUR SKIN IS DRIPPING AND GOOEY, THAT IT CAN TAKE IN EVERYTHING YOU LOVE AND INTEGRATE IT INTO YOU. BIRTH AND DEATH WOULD BE IRRELEVANT TO YOU. IMAGINE HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE IF WE COULD MIX TOGETHER ALL THE SCATTERED THINGS WE LOVE IN THIS WORLD.



THIS IS WHERE THE SIAMESE TWINS MAKE THEIR ENTRANCE. THEY ARE TWO AND ONE. BORN ON THE SAME DAY, THEY WILL DIE ON THE SAME DAY. SURGERY EXISTS TO SEPARATE THEM, BUT THE MOMENT IT IS PERFORMED THE CONCEPT OF THEIR EXISTENCE AS SIAMESE TWINS IS DESTROYED.

THERE'S NO OTHER BEING THAT PERSONIFIES THE UTOPIA OF THE NEGATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL SO MUCH AS THEM. THE SIAMESE TWINS IN THIS WORK ARE MALE AND FEMALE. MEDICALLY THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE. ONLY IDENTICAL TWINS HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING THEIR FLESH FUSED IN SUCH A WAY, AND SO THEY MUST BE THE SAME SEX.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE PROTAGONISTS ARE THE EMBODIMENT OF THE AUTHOR'S IDEAL TOO. I CAN ALSO INFER THAT OHKOSHI KOUTAROU IS A MAN WHO SHARES MY ANGUISH AND TASTES.

THE TIME AXIS, THE SPATIAL AXIS, EVERYTHING GETS IN THE WAY. EVERY BOUNDARY LINE FOSTERS SUFFERING. THEN CONSCIOUSNESS, PERSONALITY, INDIVIDUALITY... EVERYTHING THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE HUMAN BEING IS TRIVIAL. WHY AREN'T HUMANS JUST LIQUIDS?

I WAS THINKING, MAYBE THE AUTHOR OHKOSHI KOUTAROU IS ONE WHO SEEKS THE WAY. THE ONE CONSISTENT THING IN HIS WORKS IS A UNIQUE EROTICISM. THE BASIC PURPOSE OF SEX IS TO UNITE WITH OTHERS, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO CREATE A CHIMERA (A COMPOSITE BEAST) OF THE TWO PARTIES. THAT'S CHILDBIRTH, THE RESULT OF WHICH IS THAT WE ARE BORN AND BUT THE HORRIBLE SOLITUDE IS NOT REDUCED ONE IOTA.

IT'S IN THIS MEANING, THAT OHKOSHI KOUTAROU'S WORKS CARRY A LARGE QUANTITY OF EROTICISM. I'VE BEEN GRIPPED BY SEXUAL URGES MANY TIMES WHILE READING HIS WORKS. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL MORE SEXUAL STIMULUS IN HIS WORKS THAN IN ONES THAT WERE DRAWN PURELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF SEXUAL TITILLATION. I INTERVIEWED OHKOSHI KOUTAROU ONCE AND THIS IS WHAT I SAID TO HIM. "THE MAJORITY OF YOUR WORKS EXPAND MY SEXUAL IMAGINATION." TO BE HONEST, I THOUGHT HE WOULD BE REPULSED. BUT HE SMILED AND SAID, "I'M SO HAPPY TO HEAR THAT." HE WAS HAPPY.
I REMAIN ISOLATED AS ALWAYS BUT I THOUGHT, AS LONG AS HIS WORKS EXIST I MIGHT BE ABLE TO ENJOY MYSELF IN THIS HELL. THE LAST SCENE OF THE BOOK. THE ONE PROTAGONIST WHO ARE LIKE TWO (OR PERHAPS THE OTHER WAY AROUND) GAZE AT THE RAILWAY LINE. WILL THEY FIND HOPE OR DESPAIR THERE? DOES HAPPINESS LIE IN THEIR FUTURE, OR RUIN? WE CAN'T KNOW. BUT THAT UNKNOWN IS EXTREMELY REALISTIC. REALITY IN ILLUSIONS.
UNTIL HUMANS ARE LIBERATED FROM THE CURSE OF INDIVIDUALITY AND EXISTENCE, WE'LL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE READING OHKOSHI'S WORKS.

天国に結ぶ恋 ◇一◇

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著者　大越孝太郎
方言訳　和嶋慎治
解説　鶴岡法斎。
題字　静香㊞
装丁協力　大越雅彦
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乱丁・落丁はお取り替えいたします。
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